Frommer's

PORTABLE

Hong Kong

Plan Your Trip Online at **Frommers.com**

VISIT…

PORTABLE

Hong Kong

2nd Edition

by Beth Reiber

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

A New Star-Rating System & Other Exciting News from Frommer's!

In our continuing effort to publish the savviest, most up-to-date, and most appealing travel guides available, we've added some great new features.

Frommer's guides now include a new **star-rating system.** Every hotel, restaurant, and attraction is rated from 0 to 3 stars to help you set priorities and organize your time.

We've also added **seven brand-new features** that point you to the great deals, in-the-know advice, and unique experiences that separate travelers from tourists. Throughout the guide, look for:

Finds	Special finds—those places only insiders know about
Fun Fact	Fun facts—details that make travelers more informed and their trips more fun
Kids	Best bets for kids—advice for the whole family
Moments	Special moments—those experiences that memories are made of
Overrated	Places or experiences not worth your time or money
Tips	Insider tips—some great ways to save time and money
Value	Great values—where to get the best deals

Here's what critics say about Frommer's:

"Amazingly easy to use. Very portable, very complete."

—Booklist

"Detailed, accurate, and easy-to-read information for all price ranges."

—Glamour Magazine

"Hotel information is close to encyclopedic."

—Des Moines Sunday Register

"Frommer's Guides have a way of giving you a real feel for a place."

—Knight Ridder Newspapers

PORTABLE

Hong Kong

2nd Edition

by Beth Reiber

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Published by:

Wiley Publishing, Inc.
909 Third Ave.
New York, NY 10022

Copyright © 2003 Wiley Publishing, Inc., New York, New York. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 750-8400, fax (978) 646-8700. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Legal Department, Wiley Publishing, Inc., 10475 Crosspoint Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46256, (317) 572-3447, fax (317) 572-4447, E-mail: permcoordinator@wiley.com.

Wiley and the Wiley Publishing logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Wiley Publishing, Inc. and may not be used without written permission. Frommer's is a trademark or registered trademark of Arthur Frommer. Used under license. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Wiley Publishing, Inc. is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

ISBN 0-7645-6749-7
ISSN 1532-9933

Editor: Kendra L. Falkenstein
Production Editor: M. Faunette Johnston
Photo Editor: Richard Fox
Cartographer: John Decamillis
Production by Wiley Indianapolis Composition Services

For information on our other products and services or to obtain technical support, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 800-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993 or fax 317-572-4002.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic formats.

Manufactured in the United States of America

5 4 3 2 1

Contents

List of Maps vii

1 Planning Your Trip to Hong Kong 1

1 Visitor Information 2
2 Entry Requirements & Customs 3
3 Money 4
4 When to Go 7
Hong Kong Calendar of Events 8
5 Health & Insurance 11
6 Tips for Travelers with Special Needs 13
7 Getting There 15

2 Getting to Know Hong Kong 20

1 Orientation 20
Neighborhoods in Brief 22
2 Getting Around 27
Fast Facts: Hong Kong 34

3 Where to Stay 39

Choosing a Place to Stay 40
1 Very Expensive 43
2 Expensive 50
3 Moderate 58
4 Inexpensive 67
5 Rock-Bottom Accommodations (Guesthouses & Youth Hostels) 71

4 Where to Dine 74

1 Kowloon 75
2 Central District 87
3 Causeway Bay & Wan Chai 98
4 Around Hong Kong Island 102

5 Exploring Hong Kong 106

1 Hong Kong's Top Attractions 106
2 Museums & Galleries 110
3 Temples 117
Life on the Water in Aberdeen 118
4 Parks & Gardens 120
5 An Amusement Park 124
6 Organized Tours & Cultural Activities 125
7 Outdoor Activities 128
8 Spectator Sports 130
9 Lantau 131

6 Shopping 135

1 The Shopping Scene 135
A Shopping Warning 136
2 Great Shopping Areas 138
3 Shopping A to Z 141

7 Hong Kong After Dark 158

1 The Performing Arts 158
2 The Club & Music Scene 161
3 The Bar Scene 163
4 Only in Hong Kong 170

Index 172

General Index 172
Accommodations Index 176
Restaurant Index 176

List of Maps

Hong Kong Orientation 21
Kowloon Accommodations 45
Central District Accommodations 47
Causeway Bay & Wan Chai Accommodations 51
Kowloon Dining 77
Central District Dining 89
Causeway Bay & Wan Chai Dining 99
Kowloon Attractions 111
Central District Attractions 115
Attractions Elsewhere on Hong Kong Island 123
Shopping in Tsim Sha Tsui 139

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank some fine and very special people who graciously extended their help in the preparation of this book: Lillibeth Bishop, Diana Budiman, Elven Ho, and Mandy Lo of the Hong Kong Tourist Association; and Teresa Costa Gomes of the Macau Government Tourist Office. A special thanks goes to my sons, Matthias and Johannes, for putting up with my long absences ever since they can remember.

About the Author

Beth Reiber worked for several years in Germany as a freelance travel writer writing for major U.S. newspapers and in Tokyo as editor of the *Far East Traveler.* Now a freelance travel writer residing in Lawrence, Kansas, with her two sons, she's the author of several Frommer's guides, including *Frommer's Japan* and *Frommer's Tokyo,* and is a contributor to *Frommer's Europe from $70 a Day, Frommer's USA,* and *Frommer's China.*

An Invitation to the Reader

In researching this book, we discovered many wonderful places — hotels, restaurants, shops, and more. We're sure you'll find others. Please tell us about them, so we can share the information with your fellow travelers in upcoming editions. If you were disappointed with a recommendation, we'd love to know that, too. Please write to:

Frommer's Portable Hong Kong, 2nd Edition
Wiley Publishing, Inc. • 909 Third Ave. • New York, NY 10022

An Additional Note

Please be advised that travel information is subject to change at any time—and this is especially true of prices. We therefore suggest that you write or call ahead for confirmation when making your travel plans. The authors, editors, and publisher cannot be held responsible for the experiences of readers while traveling. Your safety is important to us, however, so we encourage you to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings. Keep a close eye on cameras, purses, and wallets, all favorite targets of thieves and pickpockets.

What the Symbols Mean

The following abbreviations are used for credit cards:

AE	American Express	DISC	Discover	V	Visa
DC	Diners Club	MC	MasterCard		

FROMMERS.COM

Now that you have the guidebook to a great trip, visit our website at **www.frommers.com** for travel information on nearly 2,500 destinations. With features updated regularly, we give you instant access to the most current trip-planning information available. At Frommers.com, you'll also find the best prices on airfares, accommodations, and car rentals—and you can even book travel online through our travel booking partners. At Frommers.com, you'll also find the following:

- Online updates to our most popular guidebooks
- Vacation sweepstakes and contest giveaways
- Newsletter highlighting the hottest travel trends
- Online travel message boards with featured travel discussions

1

Planning Your Trip to Hong Kong

Viewed from Victoria Peak, Hong Kong rates as one of the most stunning cities in Southeast Asia, if not the world. In the foreground rise the skyscrapers of Hong Kong Island, numerous, dense, and astonishingly tall. Beyond that is Victoria Harbour, with its incredibly busy traffic of everything from the historic Star Ferry to cruise liners, cargo ships, and wooden fishing vessels. On the other side is Kowloon Peninsula, growing larger seemingly by the minute with ambitious land reclamation projects, housing estates, and ever-higher buildings, all against a dramatic backdrop of gently rounded mountains.

If this is your first stop in Asia, Hong Kong will seem excitingly exotic, with its profusion of neon Chinese signs, roasted ducks hanging in restaurant windows, colorful street markets, herbal medicine shops, fortunetellers, and crush of people, 95% of whom are Chinese.

If you're arriving from elsewhere in Asia, however, Hong Kong may seem welcomingly familiar, with its first-class hotels, restaurants serving everything from California-style pizzas to French haute cuisine, easy-to-navigate transportation system, English-language street signs, and gigantic shopping malls.

Hong Kong's unique blend of exotic and familiar, East and West, is due, of course, to its 156 years as a British colony — from 1842, when Britain acquired Hong Kong Island as a spoil of the first Opium War, to its 1997 handover to the Chinese. As a Special Administrative Region (SAR), Hong Kong has been guaranteed its capitalist lifestyle and social system for 50 years, and for the casual observer, little seems changed. English is still an official language, the Hong Kong dollar remains legal tender, and entry formalities are largely the same. Although Hong Kong is pricier than most other Asian destinations, the long-standing Asian financial crisis has made it more affordable than ever, with reduced hotel rates and competitive restaurant prices.

Much of the anxiety associated with travel comes from a fear of the unknown — not knowing what to expect can give even seasoned travelers butterflies. This chapter will help you prepare for your trip to Hong Kong — but don't stop here. Reading through the other chapters before leaving will also help you in your planning. Just learning that Hong Kong has hiking trails and beaches, for example, may prompt you to pack your hiking boots or swimsuit. Keep in mind, however, that some of the information given here may change during the lifetime of this book.

1 Visitor Information

The **Hong Kong Tourist Board (HKTB)** offers a wealth of free information for travelers, including brochures on everything from hotels to sightseeing. See "Orientation," in chapter 2 for a complete listing of tourist offices in Hong Kong itself and a rundown of available booklets and brochures.

OVERSEAS

Although the information stocked by HKTB offices abroad is sometimes not as up-to-date or as thorough as that available in Hong Kong itself or through the Internet (see below), it's worth contacting a local HKTB office before leaving home for general information and a map.

In the **United States:** General information can be obtained by calling ✆ **800/282-4582.** HKTB offices are located at 115 E. 54th St., Second Floor, New York, NY 10022-4512 (✆ **212/421-3382;** fax 212/421-8428; nycwwo@hktb.com); 10940 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 2050, Los Angeles, CA 90024-3915 (✆ **310/208-0233;** fax 310/208-2398; laxwwo@hktb.com); and 130 Montgomery St., San Francisco CA 94104 (✆ **415/781-4587;** fax 415/392-2964; sfowwo@hktb.com).

In **Canada:** Hong Kong Trade Centre, Third Floor, 9 Temperance St., Toronto, ON, Canada M5H 1Y6 (✆ **800/563-4582** or 416/366-2389; fax 416/366-1098; yyzwwp@hktb.com).

In the **United Kingdom:** 6 Grafton St., London W1S 4EQ, England (✆ **20/7533-7100;** fax 20/7533-7111; lonwwo@hktb.com).

In **Australia:** Hong Kong House, Level 4, 80 Druitt St., Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia (✆ **02/9283-3083;** fax 02/9283-3383; sydwwo@hktb.com).

In **New Zealand:** P.O. Box 2120, Auckland 1001, New Zealand (✆ **09/307-2580;** fax 09/307-2581; aukwwo@hktb.com).

HKTB ONLINE

You can have a virtual visit to Hong Kong by visiting HKTB's home page at **www.discoverhongkong.com**. The site provides a comprehensive overview of Hong Kong — maps of the region, major attractions, a detailed weekly calendar of performing arts and festivals, listings for hotels and restaurants, and guided tours.

2 Entry Requirements & Customs

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

The only document most tourists need to enter the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) is a passport, valid for at least 1 month beyond the planned departure date from Hong Kong. Americans, Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians, and other British Commonwealth citizens can stay for 3 months without a visa. Citizens of the United Kingdom can stay for 6 months without a visa. Immigration officers may also ask arriving visitors for proof of onward travel or a return ticket (unless they are in transit to mainland China or Macau) and that they have adequate funds for their stay in Hong Kong (generally, a confirmed hotel reservation and a credit card will suffice).

Once in Hong Kong, visitors must carry photo identification at all times, such as a passport or driver's license. Safeguard your passport in an inconspicuous, inaccessible place like a money belt. If you lose it, visit the nearest consulate of your native country as soon as possible for a replacement. As an extra safety precaution, it's a good idea to photocopy your passport.

CUSTOMS

ENTERING HONG KONG Visitors are allowed to bring into the SAR duty-free a reasonable quantity of cosmetics and perfumes in opened bottles for personal use and, if over the age of 18, a 1-liter (34-oz.) bottle of alcohol and 200 cigarettes (or 50 cigars or 250g of tobacco).

WHAT YOU CAN TAKE HOME For information, **U.S. citizens** should contact the **U.S. Customs Service,** 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20229 (✆ **877/287-8867**), and request the free pamphlet *Know Before You Go.* It's also available on the Web at www.customs.gov. (Click on "Traveler Information," then "Know Before You Go Brochure.")

For a clear summary of **Canadian** rules, write for the booklet *I Declare,* issued by the **Canada Customs and Review Agency**

(✆ **800/461-9999** in Canada, or 204/983-3500; www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca).

Citizens of the U.K. should contact HM Customs & Excise at ✆ **0845/010-9000** (from outside the U.K., 020/8929-0152), or consult their website at www.hmce.gov.uk for information.

For information, **Australian citizens** should contact the **Australian Customs Service** by calling ✆ **1300/363-263** or logging on to www.customs.gov.au.

Citizens of **New Zealand** can have most of their questions answered in a free pamphlet available at New Zealand consulates and Customs offices: *New Zealand Customs Guide for Travellers, Notice no. 4.* For more information, contact **New Zealand Customs,** The Customhouse, 17–21 Whitmore St., Box 2218, Wellington (✆ **04/473-6099** or 0800/428-786; www.customs.govt.nz).

3 Money

While Hong Kong may seem expensive compared to many other Asian cities, bargains abound, especially for hotel rooms. As for dining, Hong Kong has always been reasonable compared to New York and major European cities. According to figures released by the Hong Kong Tourist Board, North Americans spend an average of HK$1,478 (US$192) per day on hotels, meals, shopping, and entertainment.

With a long history of tourism — and shopping — Hong Kong is well equipped to meet visitors' money demands.

CURRENCY

The basic unit of currency is the **Hong Kong dollar (HK$),** which is divided into 100 cents. Since 1983, when negotiations between Britain and China concerning Hong Kong's future sent public confidence and the value of the Hong Kong dollar into a nose dive, the Hong Kong dollar has been pegged to the U.S. dollar at a rate of 7.8 (which means that US$1 equals HK$7.8), giving the Hong Kong currency greater stability.

Three banks, the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC), the Bank of China, and the Standard Chartered Bank, all issue their own colorful notes, in denominations of HK$10 (which is being phased out), HK$20, HK$50, HK$100, HK$500, and HK$1,000. As for coins, they're issued by the government in bronze for HK10¢, HK20¢, and HK50¢ pieces; in silver for HK$1, HK$2, and HK$5; and in nickel and bronze for HK$10. The HK$10 coins were issued in 1995 to replace HK$10 notes; the latter, though

valid, are increasingly rare. Also valid are coins with the likeness of Britain's Queen Elizabeth, though these are also becoming rare (and are being snapped up by collectors) and have been replaced with coins depicting the bauhinia flower.

At any rate, throughout the SAR, you'll see the dollar sign ("$"), which of course refers to Hong Kong dollars, not U.S. dollars. To prevent confusion, this guide identifies Hong Kong dollars with the symbol "HK$" (followed in parentheses by the U.S. dollar conversion). Although the official conversion rate is pegged at 7.8, you'll receive slightly less at banks, hotels, and currency exchange offices. During my last trip, I encountered exchange rates ranging from 7.74 (at a Hang Seng bank) to 7.03 (at a currency exchange office). Some banks offer better exchange rates but charge a commission (worth it if you're exchanging large amounts of money); American Express offices may have lower exchange rates but do not charge a commission on American Express traveler's checks. In any case, you'll almost always receive the best rate of exchange at a bank or American Express office. If possible, avoid changing money at hotels and currency exchange offices (hotels and currency exchange offices are usually the worst). It's a good idea to exchange at least some money — just enough to cover airport incidentals and transportation to your hotel — before you leave home, so you can avoid the less-favorable rates you'll get at airport currency exchange desks.

For the matter of convenience, therefore, all conversions in this book are based on HK$7.70 to US$1 (and then rounded off to the nearest nickel on amounts less than US$10 and to the nearest dollar on amounts more than US$10). If the exchange rate changes drastically — i.e., it is no longer pegged to the U.S. dollar — plan your budget accordingly.

ATMS

There are ATMs throughout Hong Kong, and one of the best reasons to carry a credit or a debit card is to obtain cash from an ATM. Not only do you eliminate the inconvenience of being able to exchange money only during banking hours, but the exchange rate is better. However, commission fees may be higher than those charged for exchanging cash or traveler's checks, so be sure you're going to change an amount that warrants the fee. To draw money from a Hong Kong ATM with either a credit or a debit card, you must have a four-digit personal identification number (PIN). Be sure, also, of your daily withdrawal limit. If you're in doubt, ask your issuing bank for information before traveling to Hong Kong.

ATMs worldwide are linked to a network that most likely includes your bank at home. **Cirrus** (✆ **800/424-7787;** www.mastercard.com) and **PLUS** (✆ **800/843-7587;** www.visa.com) are the two most popular networks and can also be found almost everywhere in Hong Kong; call or check online for specific ATM locations. Holders of MasterCard and Visa can use ATMs at the airport and various convenient locations around the city, including the Star Ferry concourses in Kowloon and Central, all major MTR (subway) stations, and major banks such as the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (which has 24-hr. machines). American Express cardholders have access to Jetco automated-teller machines and can withdraw local currency or traveler's checks at the Express Cash machines at both American Express offices (see "Fast Facts: Hong Kong," in chapter 2).

CREDIT CARDS

Credit cards are a safe way to carry money and provide a convenient record of all your expenses. Although many of the smaller shops in Hong Kong will give better prices if you pay in cash with local currency, most shops accept international credit cards, although some of the smaller ones do not. Look for credit-card signs displayed on the front door or in the shop. Readily accepted credit cards include American Express, Visa, and MasterCard. Note, however, that shops have to pay an extra fee for transactions that take place with a credit card — and they will try to pass on that expense to you. Keep this in mind if you're bargaining (see section 1 in chapter 6, "Shopping"), and make sure the shopkeeper knows whether you're going to pay with cash or plastic. All major hotels and better restaurants accept credit cards, but budget restaurants often don't. If you do pay with a credit card, check to make sure that "HK" appears before the dollar sign given for the total amount.

TRAVELER'S CHECKS

These days, traveler's checks are something of an anachronism, since Hong Kong has plenty of 24-hour ATMs. However, since you're likely to be charged an ATM withdrawal fee if the bank is not your own, if you wish to exchange money every day or two to avoid carrying around large amounts of cash, you might be better off with traveler's checks, which will be replaced if lost or stolen. Traveler's checks can be readily exchanged for Hong Kong dollars at banks, hotels, and currency-exchange offices (banks provide the most favorable rates). Traveler's checks also command a slightly better exchange rate than cash. Although Thomas Cook and other agencies can issue

traveler's checks in Hong Kong currency, I don't think this offers any advantage. For one thing, Hong Kong shops, restaurants, and hotels are not as willing as their U.S. counterparts to accept traveler's checks for payment. Secondly, you can use leftover traveler's checks in U.S. dollars (or your own national currency) for future trips, but leftover traveler's checks in Hong Kong dollars must either be reconverted (not financially advantageous, because you lose money with each conversion) or saved for future trips to Hong Kong. You'll need your passport to exchange traveler's checks.

4 When to Go

Hong Kong's peak tourist season used to be in the spring and fall, but now tourists come to Hong Kong virtually year-round, especially from neighboring mainland China. Although the drop in tourism in recent years has translated to empty hotel rooms, it's always best to make hotel reservations in advance, particularly if you're arriving during the Chinese New Year or one of the festivals described below. In addition, major conventions and trade fairs can also tie up the city's best hotels, particularly in spring (Mar–Apr) and autumn (Oct–Nov); check www.discoverhongkong.com for an updated calendar.

CLIMATE

Because of its subtropical location, Hong Kong's weather is generally mild in winter and uncomfortably hot and humid in summer, with an average annual rainfall of 89 inches. The most pleasant time of year is late September to early December, when skies are clear and sunny, temperatures are in the 70s (21°C–26°C), and the humidity drops to 70%. January and February are the coldest months, with temperatures often in the 50s, but it's still a pleasant time of year. You'll want a jacket during this time. In spring (Mar–May), the temperature can range between 60°F and 80°F (16°C and 27°C) and the humidity rises to about 84%, with fog and rain fairly common. That means you'll need a raincoat and there may not be much of a view from the cloud-enveloped Victoria Peak. By May, it can also be quite hot and muggy.

By summer (late May to mid-Sept), temperatures are often in the 90s (32°C–37°C), humidity can be 90% or more, and there's little or no relief even at night. If you're visiting the SAR this time of year, you'd be prudent to carry a hat, sunblock, sunglasses, and plenty of bottled water with you wherever you go. You'll also want a light jacket for air-conditioned rooms and an umbrella. This is when

Hong Kong receives the most rain; it's also typhoon season. However, Hong Kong has a very good warning system, so there's no need to worry about the dangers of a tropical storm.

HOLIDAYS

Hong Kong has 17 public holidays a year, including some of the festivals described below. The majority are Chinese and are therefore celebrated according to the lunar calendar, with different dates each year. Since most shops, restaurants, and attractions remain open except during the Chinese New Year, the holidays should not cause any inconvenience to visitors. Banks, however, are closed. ***Note:*** Lunar New Year and Easter are always counted as 3 days, excluding Sundays, since Sundays are always considered holidays and, therefore, are not counted as part of the 17 public holidays a year.

Public holidays for 2003 and 2004 are: New Year's Day (Jan 1), Lunar New Year (Jan 31–Feb 3, 2003; Jan 22–24, 2004), Ching Ming Festival (Apr 5, 2003; Apr 5, 2004), Easter (Good Friday through Easter Monday), Labour Day (May 1), Buddha's Birthday (May 8, 2003; May 26, 2004), Tuen Ng Festival (Dragon Boat Festival; June 4, 2003; June 22, 2004), Establishment Day of the Special Administrative Region (Hong Kong's return to China; July 1), day following Mid-Autumn Festival (Sept 12, 2003; Sept 29, 2004), National Day (Oct 1), Chung Yeung Festival (Oct 4, 2003; Oct 22, 2004), Christmas Day (Dec 25), the first weekday after Christmas (Dec 26, 2003; Dec 27, 2004).

HONG KONG CALENDAR OF EVENTS

If you're lucky, your trip might coincide with one of Hong Kong's colorful festivals. The only time shops and offices close at festival time is during the Chinese New Year, though some in Tsim Sha Tsui remain open to cater to tourists.

Below are the most popular events, including Chinese festivals and festivals of the arts. Your best source for additional information on all of these events is the **Hong Kong Tourist Board** (✆ **852/2508 1234** in Hong Kong), which can provide detailed information on where events are being staged and how to get there. For several of the festivals, HKTB even offers organized tours, which is one of the best ways to secure front-row seats without battling the crowds.

January/February

Chinese New Year. The most important Chinese holiday, this is a 3-day affair, a time for visiting friends and relatives, settling debts, doing a thorough housecleaning, consulting fortune-tellers, and worshipping ancestors. Strips of red paper with greetings of

wealth, good fortune, and longevity are pasted on doors, and families visit temples. Most shops (except those in tourist areas) close down for at least 2 or 3 days; streets and building facades are decorated with elaborate light displays; flower markets sell peach trees, chrysanthemums, and other good-luck flowers; a parade winds its way along the waterfront, usually on the first day; and a dazzling display of fireworks lights up the harbor, usually on the second day of the holiday. Since this festival is largely a family affair (much like the Christian Christmas), it holds little interest for the tourist. In fact, if you're planning a side trip into China, this would be the worst time to go, since all routes to the mainland are clogged with Hong Kong Chinese returning home to visit relatives. Late January or early February (Jan 31–Feb 3, 2003; Jan 22–24, 2004).

CityFestival. An alternative arts festival featuring lively fare from local and international artists, including theater, performance art, dance, music, and art exhibitions, held at various venues throughout Hong Kong. Contact the Fringe Theater at ✆ **852/2521 7251** or www.hkfringe.com.hk for more information. Month of January.

February/March

Hong Kong Arts Festival. This is a 3-week-long celebration with performances by world-renowned orchestras, pop and jazz ensembles, opera, dance, and theater companies (including experimental theater and Chinese operas), and with ethnic music and art exhibitions. For a schedule of events, venues, and ticket information, call ✆ **852/2824 2430** or HKTB at ✆ **852/2508 1234,** or visit the website www.artsfestival.org. February/March.

March

Hong Kong Sevens Rugby Tournament, Hong Kong Stadium. Known as "The Sevens," this is one of Hong Kong's most popular, and one of Asia's largest, sporting events, with more than 20 teams from around the world competing for the Cup Championship. A 3-day pass costs HK$750 (US$98). Contact the Hong Kong Rugby Football Union at ✆ **852/2504 8311** or www.hksevens.com.hk. Fourth weekend in March.

March/April

Ching Ming Festival, all Chinese cemeteries (especially in Aberdeen, Happy Valley, Chai Wan, and Cheung Chau island). A Confucian festival to honor the dead, observed by sweeping ancestral graves, burning incense, offering food and flowers, and picnicking among the graves. Contact HKTB at ✆ **852/2508 1234.** Fourth or fifth day of the Third Moon, March/April.

April

Tin Hau Festival, all Tin Hau temples, especially in Joss House Bay and Yuen Long. One of Hong Kong's most colorful festivals, this celebrates the birth of Tin Hau, goddess of the sea and Hong Kong's most popular deity among fishing folk. The celebration stems from a legendary fisherman's daughter who could supposedly calm stormy seas and protect fishermen. To pay her tribute, fishing boats are decorated with colorful flags, there are parades and lion dances, and family shrines are carried to shore to be blessed by Taoist priests. Contact HKTB, which organizes special tours of the events, at ✆ **852/2508 1234.** Twenty-third day of the Third Moon (usually Apr).

Hong Kong International Film Festival, Hong Kong Arts Centre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre, City Hall, and other venues around town. More than 200 films from more than 40 countries are featured at this 2-week event, including new releases, documentaries, and archival films. Tickets cost HK$55 (US$7.15). For more information, call ✆ **852/2734 2903** or 852/2734 9009, or check www.hkiff.org.hk. Two weeks in April.

April/May

Cheung Chau Bun Festival, Pak Tai Temple, Cheung Chau island. Unique to Hong Kong, this weeklong affair is thought to appease restless ghosts and spirits. Originally held to placate the unfortunate souls of those murdered by pirates, it features a street parade of lions and dragons and Chinese opera, as well as floats with children seemingly suspended in the air, held up by cleverly concealed wires. The end of the festival is heralded by three bun-covered scaffolds erected in front of the Pak Tai Temple. These buns supposedly bring good luck to those who receive them. HKTB organizes tours of the parade; call ✆ **852/2508 1234.** Usually late April or early May, but the exact date is chosen by divination (check with the HKTB).

Buddha's Birthday, Buddhist temples throughout Hong Kong. Worshippers flock to pay respect to Siddhartha Sakyamuni, founder of Buddhism, and to bathe Buddha statues. The Po Lin Monastery on Lantau island is one of the most popular destinations on this day. Contact the HKTB at ✆ **852/2508 1234.** Ninth day of the Fourth Moon, usually either in April or May (May 8, 2003; May 26, 2004).

June

Dragon Boat Races (Tuen Ng Festival). Races of long, narrow boats, gaily painted and powered by oarsmen who row to the beat of drums. It originated in ancient China, where legend held that

an imperial adviser drowned himself in a Hunan river to protest government corruption. His faithful followers, wishing to recover his body, supposedly raced out into the river in boats, beating their paddles on the surface of the water and throwing rice to distract sea creatures from his body. There are two different races: The biggest is an international competition with approximately 30 teams, held along the waterfront in Tsim Sha Tsui East; the following weekend, approximately 500 local Hong Kong teams compete, with races held at Stanley, Aberdeen, Chai Wan, Yau Ma Tei, Tai Po, and outlying islands. Contact HKTB at ✆ **852/2508 1234.** Fifth day of the Fifth Moon (June 4, 2003; June 22, 2004) for international races; local races the following weekend.

September/October

Mid-Autumn Festival, Victoria Park, Kowloon Park, and Victoria Peak. Held in early autumn, this major festival (sometimes referred to as the Moon Festival) celebrates the harvest and the brightest moon of the year. In honor of the event, local people light lanterns in the shapes of fish, flowers, and even ships and planes, gaze at the moon, and eat mooncakes (sweet rolls with sesame seeds, duck eggs, and ground lotus seeds). The mooncakes commemorate the 14th-century uprising against the Mongols, when written messages calling for the revolt were concealed in cakes smuggled to the rebels. Today the Urban Council organizes lantern carnivals in parks on both Hong Kong Island and Kowloon, where you can join the Chinese for strolls among hundreds of lanterns, making this one of Hong Kong's most charming and picturesque festivals. Contact HKTB at ✆ **852/2807 6177.** Fifteenth day of the Eighth Moon, either in September or October (Sept 12, 2003 and Sept 29, 2004).

5 Health & Insurance

STAYING HEALTHY

No shots or inoculations are required for entry to the SAR, but you will need proof of a vaccination against cholera if you have been in an infected area during the 14 days preceding your arrival. Check with your travel agent or call the Hong Kong Tourist Authority if you are traveling through Asia before reaching Hong Kong.

Generally, you're safe eating anywhere in Hong Kong, even at roadside food stalls. Stay clear of local oysters and shellfish, however, and remember that many restaurants outside the major hotels and tourist areas use MSG in their dishes as a matter of course. Water is safe to drink except in rural areas, where you should drink bottled water.

Prescriptions can be filled at Hong Kong pharmacies only if they're issued by a local doctor. To avoid hassle, be sure to bring more of your prescriptions than you think you'll need, clearly labeled in their original packages; pack prescription medications in your carry-on luggage. It's also a good idea to carry copies of your prescriptions in case you run out, including generic names in case a local pharmacist is unfamiliar with the brand name. Over-the-counter items are easy to obtain, though name brands may be different from those back home, and some ingredients allowed elsewhere may be forbidden in Hong Kong (and vice versa).

If you get sick, you may want to contact the concierge at your hotel — some upper-range hotels have in-house doctors or clinics. Otherwise, your embassy in Hong Kong can provide a list of area doctors who speak English. You can also contact the **International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers (IAMAT)** (**✆ 716/754-4883;** www.iamat.org), an organization that lists many local English-speaking doctors. Otherwise, if you can't find a doctor who can help you right away, try the emergency room at the local hospital. Many emergency rooms have walk-in-clinics for cases that are not life-threatening.

TRAVEL INSURANCE AT A GLANCE

There are several kinds of travel insurance: trip-cancellation, medical, and lost-luggage coverage. First of all, however, you should check your existing insurance policies, since you're likely to have partial or complete coverage. If you do need additional coverage, ask your travel agent about a comprehensive package. The cost of travel insurance varies widely, depending on the cost and length of your trip, your age and overall health, and the type of trip you're taking. Insurance for extreme sports or adventure travel, for example, will cost more than coverage for a cruise.

MEDICAL INSURANCE

Before leaving home you should check whether your existing health insurance covers you if you should get sick (especially if you have an HMO; Medicare does not cover travel outside North America). If you need hospital treatment, most health insurance plans will cover out-of-country hospital visits and procedures, at least to some extent. However, most make you pay the bills up front at the time of care, and you'll get a refund after you've returned and filed all the paperwork. Be sure to carry your identification card in your wallet.

The cost of travel medical insurance varies widely. Check your existing policies before you buy additional coverage. Also, check to

see if your medical insurance covers you for emergency medical evacuation. If you have to buy a one-way same-day ticket home and forfeit your nonrefundable round-trip ticket, you may be out big money.

6 Tips for Travelers with Special Needs

FOR TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Hong Kong can be a nightmare for travelers with disabilities. City sidewalks — especially in Central and Kowloon — can be so jam-packed that getting around on crutches or in a wheelchair is exceedingly difficult. Moreover, to cross busy thoroughfares, it's often necessary to climb stairs to a pedestrian bridge or use an underground tunnel. Also, most shops are a step or two up from the street, due to flooding during rainstorms.

However, most disabilities shouldn't stop anyone from traveling. There are more resources out there than ever before. Agencies and operators specializing in travel for those with disabilities include **Flying Wheels Travel** (✆ **507/451-5005;** www.flyingwheelstravel.com), which offers escorted tours, accessible cruises, and custom-made itineraries; and **Accessible Journeys** (✆ **800/846-4537** or 610/521-0339; www.disabilitytravel.com) caters specifically to slow walkers and wheelchair travelers and their families and friends with group tours, independent travel, and cruises.

Consider joining the **Society for Accessible Travel and Hospitality (SATH),** 347 Fifth Ave., Suite 610, New York, NY 10016 (✆ **212/447-7284;** fax 212/725-8253; www.sath.org), which offers a wealth of travel resources for all types of disabilities and informed recommendations on destinations, access guides, travel agents, tour operators, and companion services. Annual membership costs US$45 for adults and US$30 for seniors and students and includes a free subscription to its quarterly magazine, *Open World for Disability and Mature Travel,* full of good resources and information.

In addition, if you are in a wheelchair, contact the Hong Kong Tourist Board for a free booklet called *Hong Kong Access Guide for Disabled Visitors.* It provides information on more than 200 sites, including hotels, banks, cultural centers, museums, temples, and restaurants, with brief descriptions of accessibility in parking, how many steps there are at the entrance or whether there's a ramp, whether toilets are equipped for the visitors with disabilities, and more.

As for transportation, taxis are probably the most convenient mode of transportation, especially since they can load and unload passengers with disabilities in restricted zones under certain conditions and do not charge extra for carrying wheelchairs and crutches. Otherwise, the MTR (subway) has wheelchair access (elevators, ramps, or other aids) at 19 stations, as well as tactile pathways leading to platforms and exits for the visually impaired. Ferries are accessible to wheelchair users on the lower deck. For more information, contact the **Transport Department,** Floor 41, Immigration Tower on Gloucester Road in Wan Chai, for a booklet called *A Guide to Public Transport for People with Disabilities.*

FOR GAYS & LESBIANS

There are only a handful of openly gay establishments in Hong Kong — the gay community is not a vocal one, and information in English is hard to come by. **The International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA)** (✆ **800/448-8550** or 954/776-2626; fax 954/776-3303; www.iglta.org) links travelers up with gay-friendly hoteliers, tour operators, and airline and cruise-line representatives. It offers monthly newsletters, marketing mailings, and a membership directory that's updated once a year. Membership is US$200 yearly, plus a US$100 administration fee for new members.

General gay and lesbian travel agencies include **Above and Beyond Tours** (✆ **800/397-2681;** www.abovebeyondtours.com), which offers gay and lesbian tours worldwide and is the exclusive gay and lesbian tour operator for United Airlines; and **Now, Voyager** (✆ **800/255-6951;** www.nowvoyager.com), a San Francisco–based gay-owned and -operated gay and lesbian travel agency.

More information can be gleaned from ***Out and About*** (✆ **800/929-2268** or 415/644-8044; www.outandabout.com), which offers guidebooks (including a guide to Hong Kong) and a monthly newsletter packed with solid information on the global gay and lesbian scene.

SENIOR TRAVEL

For the longest time, seniors were given no discounts for sightseeing in Hong Kong. Now, however, seniors receive half-price or free admission to most museums. In addition, seniors can ride the cross-harbor ferry free of charge and receive reduced fares for ferries to the outlying islands, the trams (including the Peak Tram), and the subway system. Some discounts are available to seniors older than 60; others for seniors older than 65. In any case, seniors should carry identification for proof of age and should keep in mind that there

are many stairs to climb in Hong Kong, including overhead pedestrian bridges and in subway stations. In addition, remember that it is *very* hot and humid in summer.

7 Getting There

With more than 40 airlines and half a dozen cruise lines serving Hong Kong from around the world, it's certainly not difficult to get there. Your itinerary, the amount of time you have, and your pocketbook will probably dictate how you travel. Below are some pointers to get you headed in the right direction.

BY PLANE

THE MAJOR AIRLINES Airlines that fly nonstop between North America and Hong Kong include **Air Canada** (✆ **888/247-2262;** www.aircanada.ca), with daily flights from Vancouver; **Cathay Pacific Airways** (✆ **800/233-2742;** www.cathaypacific.com), with daily service from Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Vancouver; **Continental Airlines** (✆ **800/231-0856;** www.continental.com), with flights six times a week from New York; **Singapore Airlines** (✆ **800/742-3333;** www.singaporeair.com), with daily service from San Francisco and service three times a week from Las Vegas; and **United Airlines** (✆ **800/538-2929;** www.united.com), with daily service from San Francisco and Chicago. Other airlines flying between North America and Hong Kong with stops en route include **Northwest Airlines** (✆ **800/447-4747;** www.nwa.com), **Japan Airlines** (✆ **800/525-3663;** www.japanair.com), **Korean Air** (✆ **800/438-5000;** www.koreanair.com), and **Philippine Airlines** (✆ **800/435-9725;** philippineairlines.com). Contact your travel agent or specific carriers for current information.

From the United Kingdom, **Cathay Pacific** (✆ **020/8834 8888**), **British Airways** (✆ **0845/773 3377;** www.britishairways.com), and **Virgin Atlantic Airways** (✆ **01293/747747;** www.virgin-atlantic.com) offer daily nonstop service from London to Hong Kong. From Australia, both **Cathay Pacific** (✆ **131747**) and **Qantas** (✆ **131313;** www.qantas.com.au) offer daily nonstop service from Sydney and Melbourne. From New Zealand, **Cathay Pacific** (✆ **0508/800454**) offers daily nonstop service from Auckland.

AIRFARES

Regardless of how you buy your ticket, there are certain regulations you should know about airfare pricing. While first-class, business-

class, and regular economy fares (those with no restrictions) are the same year-round to Hong Kong, the cheapest fares (including Advance Purchase Excursion fares) usually vary according to the season. The most expensive time to go is during the peak season (June–Aug) and the last couple of weeks in December. The lowest fares are available mid-January through March. Fares in between these two extremes, known as the shoulder season, are available in April and May and again from September to mid-January. To complicate matters, each season also has different rates for both weekday and weekend flights. There are also special promotional fares.

Because the flight to Hong Kong is such a long one, you may wish to splurge for a roomier seat and upgraded service, including special counters for check-in, private lounges at the airport, and better meals, as well as a higher ticket price when choosing your carrier. You should also consider a mileage program, since this round-trip flight will earn you a lot of miles.

ARRIVING AT HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

No one who ever flew into Hong Kong's Kai Tak Airport in the past could ever quite forget the experience of landing in one of the world's most densely populated cities. The runway extended out into the bay, past apartments so close you could almost reach out and touch the laundry fluttering from the bamboo poles.

But Kai Tak, which ranked as the world's third busiest airport in 1996, was retired in 1998. Taking its place is the **Hong Kong International Airport** (✆ **852/2181 0000**), four times the size of Kai Tak. Situated just north of Lantau island on Chek Lap Kok island and reclaimed land, about 32km (20 miles) from Hong Kong's central business district, the new, state-of-the-art airport is one of the world's most user-friendly. Two runways operate 24 hours a day; a shuttle train, moving walkways, and 124 immigration desks keep people flowing efficiently; and a baggage-handling system delivers bags in approximately 10 minutes.

After Customs, visitors find themselves in the arrivals hall. One of the first things you should do is stop by the counter of the **Hong Kong Tourist Board (HKTB),** where you can pick up a map of the city, sightseeing brochures, and a wealth of other information, as well as get directions to your hotel. It's open during peak hours, generally daily from 7am to 11pm.

Also in the arrivals hall is the counter of the **Hong Kong Hotel Association,** where you can book a room in one of its 60-some

member hotels free of charge; open daily 6am to midnight. Note that while they do not have information on rock-bottom establishments, they can book rooms in several low-priced lodgings and the YMCAs.

If you plan on traveling to Macau, stop by the **Macau tourist information counter,** also in the arrivals lobby at 3B; it's open daily from 9am to 1pm, 1:30 to 6pm, and 6:30 to 10:30pm.

You can **exchange money** at the arrivals hall, but since the rate here is rather unfavorable, it's best to exchange only what you need to get into town — about US$50 should be enough.

At any rate, all passenger services, including the passenger terminal, arrivals hall, and transportation into the city, are on one level, which means you never have to use a staircase or elevator.

If you need to leave luggage at the airport, there is a **luggage-storage counter** on the departure floor.

GETTING INTO TOWN FROM THE AIRPORT

The quickest way to get to downtown Hong Kong is via the sleek **Airport Express Line** (✆ **852/2881 8888**), which is straight ahead after passing Customs and entering the arrivals hall. Trains run every 10 minutes between 6am and 1am and take 20 minutes to reach Kowloon Station (off Jordan St. at the old Jordan Ferry Pier and near hotels in Tsim Sha Tsui and Yau Ma Tei) and 24 minutes to reach Hong Kong Station, on Hong Kong Island in the Central District (near Exchange Sq., just west of the Star Ferry terminus). Fares are HK$90 (US$12) to Kowloon and HK$100 (US$13) to Central; if you're planning to return to the airport via the Airport Express Line, consider purchasing a stored-value Octopus card for HK$300 (US$39), which allows unlimited travel by public transportation for 3 days and includes the trip from and to the airport (see "Getting Around," in chapter 2 for more information). From both Kowloon and Hong Kong stations, free shuttle bus service deposits passengers at most major hotels, departing every 20 to 30 minutes between 6am and 11pm. This Airport Express Shuttle Bus service is free for those who have arrived from the airport via the Airport Express. Passengers must show a plane ticket, boarding pass, Airport Express ticket, or Octopus card before boarding. The buses serve most major hotels.

In addition to the Airport Express, there are also dedicated airport buses that connect the airport with major downtown Hong Kong areas. Easiest if you have lots of luggage — but most expensive — is the **Airport Shuttle** (✆ **852/2735 7823**), which provides door-to-

door service between the airport and major hotels. Tickets, available at a counter in the airport arrivals hall, cost HK$120 (US$16), with buses departing every 30 minutes. It takes about 30 to 40 minutes to reach Tsim Sha Tsui, depending on the traffic.

Slower, with more stops, are **Cityflyer Airbuses** (✆ **852/2873 0818**), also with ticket counters in the arrivals hall (if you pay onboard, you must have exact fare). Most important for tourists is Airbus A21, which travels through Mong Kok, Yau Ma Tei, Jordan, and down Nathan Road through Tsim Sha Tsui on its way to the KCR Kowloon-Canton Railway Station in Hung Hom; and Airbuses A11 and A12, which travel to Hong Kong Island. Buses depart every 10 to 30 minutes, with fares costing HK$33 (US$4.30) to Kowloon and HK$40 to HK$45 (US$5.20–US$5.85) to Central and Causeway Bay.

The easiest way to travel from the airport, of course, is to simply jump in a taxi, since taxis are quite cheap in Hong Kong but expensive for the long haul from the airport. Depending on traffic and your final destination, a taxi to Tsim Sha Tsui costs approximately HK$300 (US$39), while a taxi to the Central District will cost about HK$350 to HK$400 (US$46–US$52). There's also an extra luggage charge of HK$5 (US65¢) per piece of baggage.

NOTES ON DEPARTING Passengers flying Cathay Pacific, Virgin, and a handful of other airlines are offered the extra benefit of being allowed to check in for your return flight at one of two satellite stations — at Hong Kong Station near Exchange Square and at Kowloon Station, both served by the Airport Express Line (see above). Both allow you advance check-in any time from 24 hours to 90 minutes before your flight: You'll get your boarding pass, and your bags will be transferred to the airport. Note, however, that since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, U.S. airlines allow check-in only at the airport. However, there's a left-luggage service at Hong Kong Station, useful if your flight is later in the day and you want to do some sightseeing before heading for the airport (though you'll still have to pick it up and bring it to the airport yourself later on).

If you travel directly to the airport and go through check-in there, plan on arriving about 2 hours before departure. Although most tickets now include airport departure tax in their price, you may be required to pay the tax (HK$80/US$10) if yours does not. At any rate, passengers waiting for flights can browse at the Hong Kong Sky Mall, with more than 100 outlets offering merchandise and food.

BY TRAIN

It's unlikely that you'll arrive in the SAR by train, unless, of course, you've been traveling via China. Such travel became easier with the completion of the Beijing-Kowloon Railway, providing a direct link between the two cities in approximately 28 hours and costing HK$1,191 (US$155) for a bed in a deluxe, two-bed cabin, HK$934 (US$121) for a "soft bed" in a four-bed cabin, and HK$601 (US$78) for a "hard bed" in a six-bed cabin, one-way. Service is also available from Shanghai in a little more than 13 hours, costing HK$530 to HK$1,039 (US$69–US$135) one-way, and from Guangzhou (formerly Canton), costing HK$190 to HK$230 (US$25–US$30) and taking approximately 2 hours.

In any case, if you're traveling to Hong Kong via train, you'll pass through Customs at Shenzhen/Lo Wu, the border station, before continuing on the KCR East Rail to the KCR Kowloon-Canton Railway Station in Hung Hom. The KCR Railway Station is practically right in the middle of the city, though you'll probably want to take a taxi to your hotel. Expect to spend about HK$30 (US$3.90) for a taxi from the KCR Kowloon-Canton Railway Station to a hotel in Tsim Sha Tsui or Tsim Sha Tsui East. An alternative is to disembark the KCR at Kowloon Tong Station, changing there to the Mass Transit Railway (Hong Kong's subway system), which will take you straight to Tsim Sha Tsui or Central. Travel on the KCR will be easier in 2004, when extensions of both the KCR and subway system will link services at the new East Tsim Sha Tsui Station.

2 Getting to Know Hong Kong

Hong Kong is an easy city to get to know: It's surprisingly compact, with streets clearly marked in English. And not only is public transportation well organized and a breeze to use, but the Star Ferry and the trams themselves are also sightseeing attractions. In general, however, walking is the best way to go, particularly in the narrow, fascinating lanes and alleys where vehicles can't go. This chapter describes the layout of the city, explains how best to get around it, gives practical advice, and tells you where to turn for additional information.

1 Orientation

For information on getting to the city from the airport, see "Getting There," in chapter 1.

VISITOR INFORMATION

The **Hong Kong Tourist Board (HKTB)** is an excellent source for tourist information. Before coming, check out their website at **www.discoverhongkong.com**.

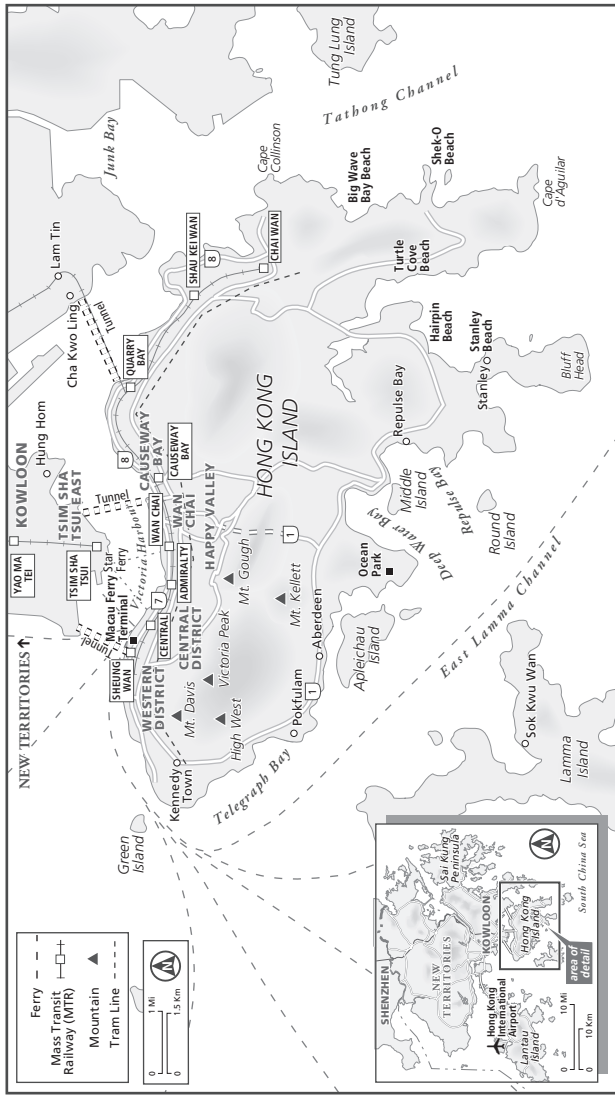
Their office in the arrivals hall of the Hong Kong International Airport is open daily from 7am to 11pm.

In town, there are two HKTB offices located on both sides of the harbor ready to serve you. On the Kowloon side, there's a convenient office in Tsim Sha Tsui, right in the Star Ferry concourse, open daily from 8am to 6pm.

On Hong Kong Island, the larger, main HKTB office is located in the Central District at 99 Queen's Rd. Central, also open daily from 8am to 6pm. It's rather inconvenient, however — about a 10-minute walk west of the Star Ferry pier and Central MTR station.

If you have a question about Hong Kong, you can call the English-speaking **HKTB Visitor Hotline** (✆ **852/2508 1234**), available daily from 8am to 6pm.

The HKTB has free maps of Hong Kong, providing close-ups of Tsim Sha Tsui, the Central District, Wan Chai, and Causeway Bay; invaluable leaflets showing the major bus routes throughout Hong



Kong; and current ferry schedules, valuable if you plan to visit any of the outlying islands.

To find out what's going on during your stay in Hong Kong, go to a tourist board office and pick up *What's On — Hong Kong,* a

HKTB leaflet published weekly that tells what's happening in theater, music, and the arts, including concerts and special exhibitions in museums. *HK Magazine,* distributed free at restaurants, bars, and other outlets around town (and aimed at a young expat readership), is a weekly that lists what's going on at the city's theaters and other venues, including plays, concerts, exhibitions, the cinema, and events in Hong Kong's alternative scene. *Where Hong Kong* and *bc* are two other magazines published monthly with information on Hong Kong. *Where Hong Kong* is distributed to rooms in major hotels. *bc* is at bookstores. All of the above are free.

CITY LAYOUT

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) is located at the southeastern tip of the People's Republic of China, some 1,996km (1,240 miles) south of Beijing; it lies just south of the Tropic of Cancer at about the same latitude as Mexico City, the Bahamas, and Hawaii.

Hong Kong Island is just a small part of the SAR, which covers 684 sq. km (425 sq. miles) and measures 48km (30 miles) north to south and 72.5km (45 miles) east to west — much of it mountainous. Hong Kong can be divided into four distinct parts: Hong Kong Island, Kowloon Peninsula, New Territories, and the outlying islands. On **Hong Kong Island** are the Central District (Hong Kong's main financial and business district and usually referred to simply as Central), the Western District, Wan Chai, and Causeway Bay, all on the island's north side. On Hong Kong Island, you'll also find such major attractions as Hong Kong Park, Victoria Peak, Stanley Market, Ocean Park, and the Zoological and Botanical Gardens.

Across Victoria Harbour, at the tip of **Kowloon Peninsula,** is Tsim Sha Tsui and its many hotels, restaurants, museums, and shops, as well as KCR Kowloon-Canton Railway Station in Hung Hom, Tsim Sha Tsui East, and the Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok districts.

For the visitor, most hotels, restaurants, and points of interest are concentrated in four areas: **Tsim Sha Tsui, Tsim Sha Tsui East,** and **Yau Ma Tei** on the Kowloon side; and **Central District, Wan Chai,** and **Causeway Bay** on Hong Kong Island.

NEIGHBORHOODS IN BRIEF

HONG KONG ISLAND

Central District This is where the story of Hong Kong all began, when a small port and community were established on the north end of the island by the British in the 1840s. Named "Victoria" in

honor of the British queen, the community quickly grew into one of Asia's most important financial and business districts, with godowns (waterfront warehouses) lining the harbor. Today the area known as the Central District but usually referred to simply as "Central," remains Hong Kong's nerve center for banking, business, and administration. If there is a heart of Hong Kong, it surely lies here, but there are few traces remaining of its colonial past.

The Central District boasts glass and steel high-rises representing some of Hong Kong's most innovative architecture, a couple of the city's posh hotels, expensive shopping centers filled with designer shops, office buildings, and restaurants and bars catering to Hong Kong's white-collar workers, primarily in the nightlife district known as Lan Kwai Fong. Although hotel choices in Central are limited to only a few upper-range hotels, staying here makes you feel like a resident yourself, as you rub elbows with the well-dressed professional crowd who work in Central's office buildings.

Central is also packed with traditional Chinese restaurants, outdoor markets, and the neon signs of family-run businesses. Rickety old trams — certainly one of Hong Kong's most endearing sights — chug their way straight through Central. There are also oases of greenery at Chater Garden — popular with office workers for a lunchtime break, the Botanical Gardens, and Hong Kong Park with its museum of teaware, housed in Hong Kong's oldest colonial-age building.

Lan Kwai Fong Named after an L-shaped street in Central, this is Hong Kong's premier nightlife-and-entertainment district, occupying not only Lan Kwai Fong but also neighboring streets like D'Aguilar, Wyndham, and other hillside streets. Filled with restaurants and bars in all price categories but popular mostly with people in their 20s and 30s, it's a good place to spend an evening.

Victoria Peak Hong Kong's most famous mountaintop, Victoria Peak has long been Hong Kong's most exclusive address. Cooler than the steamy streets of Central below, Victoria Peak, often called simply The Peak, was the exclusive domain of the British and other Europeans — even nannies had to have the governor's permission to go there, and the only way up was by sedan carried by coolies or by hiking. Today, Victoria Peak is much easier reached by the Peak Tram and affords Hong Kong's best views of Central, Victoria Harbour, and Kowloon. In fact, the view is nothing short of stunning. Also on The Peak are several attractions, some good restaurants, and multimillion-dollar mansions, glimpses of which can be had on a circular 1-hour walk around The Peak.

Mid-Levels Located about halfway up Hong Kong's Victoria Peak, the Mid-Levels has long been a popular residential area, though not as posh as the villas on The Peak. Still, swank apartment buildings, grand sweeping views of Central, leafy trees and lush vegetation, and slightly cooler temperatures make it a much-sought-after address, and to serve the army of white-collar workers who commute down to Central every day, the world's longest escalator links the Mid-Levels with Central, an ambitious project with 20-some escalators and moving sidewalks.

SoHo This relatively new dining-and-nightlife district, flanking the Hillside Escalator Link that connects Central with the Mid-Levels, is popular with Mid-Levels residents and those seeking a quieter, saner alternative to the crowds of Lan Kwai Fong. Dubbed SoHo for the region "south of Hollywood Road," it has since blossomed into an ever-growing neighborhood of cafe-bars and intimate, small restaurants specializing in ethnic and innovative cuisine, making SoHo the most exciting addition to Hong Kong's culinary and nightlife map. Most establishments center on Elgin, Shelley, and Staunton streets.

Western District Located west of the bustling Central District, the Western District is a fascinating neighborhood of Chinese shops and enterprises and is one of the oldest, most traditional areas on Hong Kong Island. Since it's one of my own personal favorites, I've spent days wandering its narrow streets and inspecting shops selling traditional herbs, ginseng, medicines, dried fish, antiques, and other Chinese products. The Western District is also famous for Hollywood Road, long popular for its many antiques and curio shops, and Man Mo Temple, one of Hong Kong's oldest temples. Unfortunately, modernization has taken its toll, and more of the old Western District seems to have vanished every time I visit, replaced by new high-rises and other projects.

Admiralty Actually part of the Central District, Admiralty is located just below Hong Kong Park, centered around an MTR subway station of the same name. It consists primarily of tall office buildings such as the Lippo Centre, the High Court Building, and Pacific Place, a classy shopping complex flanked by three deluxe hotels.

Wan Chai Located east of Central, few places in Hong Kong have changed as dramatically or noticeably as Wan Chai. It became notorious after World War II for its sleazy bars, easy women, tattoo parlors, and sailors on shore leave looking for a good time. Richard Mason's 1957 novel *The World of Suzie Wong* describes this bygone

era of Wan Chai; during the Vietnam War, it also served as a popular destination for American servicemen on R & R. Although some of the nightlife remains along Lockhart, Jaffe, and Luard roads, Wan Chai has slowly become respectable (and almost unrecognizable) with the addition of new, mostly business-style hotels, more high-rises, the Hong Kong Arts Centre, the Academy for Performing Arts, and the huge Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. An extension of the Exhibition Centre occupies reclaimed land and, with its curved roof and glass facade, is already a familiar sight on the Wan Chai waterfront. Wan Chai also boasts Central Plaza, Asia's second-tallest building and Hong Kong's tallest when it was completed in 1992.

Causeway Bay Just east of Wan Chai, Causeway Bay is popular as a shopping destination, since shops stay open late and several department stores have branches here. The whole area was once a bay until land reclamation turned the water into soil several decades ago. Now it's a busy area of Japanese department stores; clothing, shoe, and accessory boutiques; street markets; and restaurants. On its eastern perimeter is the large Victoria Park.

Aberdeen On the south side of Hong Kong Island, Aberdeen was once a fishing village but is now studded with high-rises and housing projects. However, it is still known for its hundreds of sampans, junks, boat people, and huge floating restaurant. Just to the east, in Deep Water Bay, is Ocean Park with its impressive aquarium and amusement rides.

Stanley Once a fishing village, Stanley is now a lively center for discount markets selling everything from silk suits to name-brand shoes, casual wear, and souvenirs. It's located on the quiet south side of Hong Kong Island and boasts a popular public beach, a residential area popular with Chinese and foreigners alike, and, most recently, a growing number of trendy restaurants.

KOWLOON PENINSULA

Kowloon North of Hong Kong Island, across Victoria Harbour, is the Kowloon Peninsula. The hills of Kowloon provide a dramatic backdrop for one of the world's most stunning cityscapes. Kowloon Peninsula is generally considered the area south of these hills, which means it also encompasses a very small part of the New Territories. However, "Kowloon" is most often used to describe its southernmost tip, the 12 sq. km (4¾ sq. miles) that were ceded to Britain "in perpetuity" in 1860. Its northern border is Boundary Street, which separates it from the New Territories; included in this area are the

districts Tsim Sha Tsui, Tsim Sha Tsui East, Yau Ma Tei, and Mong Kok. Once open countryside, Kowloon has practically disappeared under the dense spread of hotels, shops, restaurants, and housing and industrial projects. It has also grown due to land reclamation.

Tsim Sha Tsui At the southern tip of Kowloon Peninsula is Tsim Sha Tsui (also spelled "Tsimshatsui"), which, after Central, rates as Hong Kong's most important area. This is where most tourists stay and spend their money, since it has the greatest concentration of hotels, restaurants, and shops in Hong Kong, but, in its favor, Tsim Sha Tsui does boast the Space Museum, a new cultural center for the performing arts, a great art museum, Kowloon Park, one of the world's largest shopping malls, a nice selection of international restaurants, a jumping nightlife, and Nathan Road, appropriately nicknamed the "golden mile of shopping." Although you'd be foolish to spend all your time in Tsim Sha Tsui, you'd also be foolish to miss it.

Tsim Sha Tsui East Not surprisingly, this neighborhood is east of Tsim Sha Tsui. Built entirely on reclaimed land, the area has become increasingly important, home to a rash of expensive hotels, entertainment centers, shopping and restaurant complexes, science and history museums, a coliseum — and, on its eastern edge, the KCR Kowloon-Canton Railway Station, terminus for the Kowloon-Canton Railway that carries passengers through the New Territories and beyond to China. Although most hotels in this area are a bit of a walk from the Tsim Sha Tsui subway station, a new KCR/subway station is presently under construction, which will greatly increase this neighborhood's convenience. Until the station's completion in 2004, however, many hotels continue to provide free shuttle service to Tsim Sha Tsui. A hover-ferry service also connects Tsim Sha Tsui East and Central.

Yau Ma Tei If you get on the subway in Tsim Sha Tsui and ride two stations to the north (or walk for about 25 min. straight up Nathan Rd.), you'll reach the Yau Ma Tei district (also spelled "Yaumatei"), located on Kowloon Peninsula just north of Tsim Sha Tsui. Like the Western District, Yau Ma Tei is also very Chinese, with an interesting produce market, a jade market, and the fascinating Temple Street Night Market. There are also several moderately priced hotels here, making this a good alternative to the tourist-oriented district of Tsim Sha Tsui.

Mong Kok On Kowloon Peninsula north of Yau Ma Tei, Mong Kok is a residential and industrial area, home of the Bird Market, the Ladies' Market on Tung Choi Street, and countless shops

Tips Public Transport Tips

Keep in mind that transportation on buses and trams requires the **exact fare.** It's therefore imperative to have a lot of loose change with you wherever you go.

catering to Chinese. Its northern border, Boundary Street, marks the beginning of the New Territories.

2 Getting Around

If you've just been to Tokyo or Bangkok, Hong Kong will probably bring a rush of relief. For one thing, English is everywhere — on street signs, on buses, in the subways. In addition, the city of Hong Kong is so compact, and its public transportation system so efficient and extensive, that it's no problem at all zipping from Tsim Sha Tsui to Causeway Bay or vice versa for a meal or some shopping. Even the novice traveler should have no problem getting around. Transportation is also extremely cheap. Just remember that cars drive on the left side of the street, English-style, so be careful when stepping off the curb.

BY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Each mode of transportation in the SAR — bus, ferry, tram, and train/subway — has its own fare system and therefore requires a new ticket each time you transfer from one mode of transport to another. However, if you're going to be in Hong Kong for a few days, consider purchasing the **Octopus.** This electronic smart card allows users to hop on and off trains, trams, subways, and most (but not all) buses and ferries without worrying about purchasing tickets each time or fumbling for exact change. It also gives a slight discount over regular fares. Sold at all MTR subway stations and some ferry piers, the Octopus costs a minimum of HK$150 (US$20), including a HK$50 (US$6.50) refundable deposit, and can be reloaded in HK$100 (US$13) units. Children and seniors pay HK$70 (US$9.10) for the card, including deposit. Alternatively, you can also buy an Octopus good for 3 days of unlimited travel for HK$300 (US$39), including the trip from and to the airport on the Airport Express Line.

To use the Octopus, simply sweep the card across a special pad at the entry gate (you'll notice that most commuters don't even bother removing the card from their wallets or purses); the fare is automatically deducted. The Octopus is valid for all subways, the

Kowloon-Canton Railway (which runs northward from Kowloon through the New Territories), the Light Rail Transit system (which services the northwestern part of the New Territories), the Airport Express Line (which runs between the airport and Kowloon and Central), all trams (including the Peak Tram), most buses (except for old models, which shake too much for the card system), some minibuses, the Star Ferry, and some ferries to outlying islands. In addition, the Octopus can be used for purchases at all 7-Eleven convenience stores and in some vending machines.

BY SUBWAY The Star Ferry and trams are so popular and at times so crowded that it's hard to imagine what they must have been like before Hong Kong's subway system was constructed to relieve the human crunch. Hong Kong's **Mass Transit Railway (MTR)** is modern, efficient, clean, and easy to use, and it's also much faster than the older modes of transportation (and sometimes even taxis). The MTR operates daily from 6am to 1am. For general inquiries, call the MTR Hotline at ✆ **852/2881 8888.**

You'll probably want to avoid rush hours on the MTR, unless you enjoy feeling like a sardine in a can. There are only four lines on the 76km (47-mile) subway system, each is color-coded, and the stations are clearly marked in English, so you shouldn't have any problem finding your way around. Single-ticket, one-way fares range from HK$4 to HK$26 (US50¢–US$3.40), depending on the distance, but the most expensive ride is the trip underneath the harbor, which costs HK$9 (US$1.15) from Tsim Sha Tsui to Central (still cheap, but outrageous when compared to the Star Ferry). Fares for seniors 65 and older and children ages 3 to 11 range from HK$3 to HK$13 (US40¢–US$1.70). Fares are indicated by giving your destination on a touch screen above all vending machines, which accept HK$10, HK$5, HK$2, HK$1, and HK50¢ coins and give back change; some also accept notes. If you need coins, go to one of the change machines or to the ticket counters located at MTR stations.

In any case, your ticket is plastic, the size of a credit card, and you feed it into a slot at the turnstile. It disappears and then shoots up at the other end of the turnstile. *Be sure to save your ticket* — at the end of your journey, you will again insert your ticket into the turnstile (only this time you won't get it back unless it's an Octopus).

BY BUS Hong Kong buses are a delight — especially the British-style double-deckers. They're good for traveling to places where other forms of public transport don't go, such as to the southern part of Hong Kong Island like Stanley or up into parts of Kowloon

and the New Territories. Bus numbers containing an "X" are for express buses, with limited stops. Depending on the route, buses run from about 6am to midnight, with fares ranging from HK$1.20 to HK$45 (US15¢–US$5.85); half fare for children under 12 and seniors over 65. Air-conditioned buses cost more than non-air-conditioned buses. *You must have the exact fare,* which you deposit into a box as you get on. Make sure, therefore, that you always carry a lot of spare change, or buy an Octopus card (note, however, that not all buses accept the card). Drivers often don't speak English, so you may want to have someone at your hotel write down your destination in Chinese, particularly if you're traveling in the New Territories. And with the exception of congested areas like Central or Tsim Sha Tsui, you must flag down a bus to make it stop, especially in the New Territories or on an island.

Hong Kong's buses are operated by three companies: **New World First Bus** (✆ **852/2136 8888**), which operates on Hong Kong Island; **Kowloon Motor Bus** (KMB; ✆ **852/2745 4466**), operating in Kowloon; and the common yellow buses run by **Citybus** (✆ **852/2873 0818**), which operates on Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, and the New Territories. There are two major bus terminals, located at or near both ends of the Star Ferry. On Hong Kong Island, most buses depart from Exchange Square in the Central District or from bus stops in front of the Outlying Islands Ferry Piers. Some buses also depart from Admiralty Station. In Kowloon, buses depart from in front of the Star Ferry concourse in Tsim Sha Tsui.

The HKTB has individual leaflets for Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, and the New Territories that show bus routes to most of the major tourist spots, indicating where you can catch the bus and its frequency, the fare, and where to get off.

BY TRAM Tram lines are found only on Hong Kong Island. Established in 1904 along what used to be the waterfront, these are old, narrow, double-decker affairs that clank their way in a straight line slowly along the northern edge of the island from Kennedy Town in the west to Shau Kei Wan in the east, with one branch making a detour to Happy Valley. Passing through the Central District, Wan Chai, and Causeway Bay on Des Voeux Road, Queensway Road, and Hennessy Road, they can't be beat for atmosphere and are easy to ride since most of them go only on one line (those branching off to Happy Valley are clearly marked). Since the advent of the subway, there's been talk of getting rid of these ancient

trams, but this has raised a storm of protest. Since their future is uncertain, be sure to ride them while you can.

Enter the trams from the back and go immediately up the winding stairs to the top deck. The best seats in the house are those in the front row, where you have an unparalleled view of Hong Kong: laundry hanging from second-story windows, signs swinging over the street, markets twisting down side alleys, crowded sidewalks, and people darting in front of the tram you'd swear couldn't have made it. Riding the tram is one of the cheapest ways of touring Hong Kong Island's northern side, and the fare is the same no matter how far you go. Once you've had enough, simply go downstairs to the front of the tram and deposit the exact fare of HK$2 (US25¢) into a little tin box next to the bus driver as you exit. Children and seniors pay half fare. If you don't have the exact amount, you can overpay or, if you have one, use your Octopus card. Trams run daily from 6am to 1am.

In addition to the old-fashioned trams, there's also the **Peak Tram,** a funicular that transports passengers to one of Hong Kong's star attractions: Victoria Peak and its incomparable views. Its lower terminus is on Garden Road in Central, which you can reach via a HK$3.20 (US40¢) shuttle bus departing from the Star Ferry concourse (next to City Hall) at 10- to 20-minute intervals daily from 10am to 11:45pm (to 8pm on Sun and public holidays). The tram itself runs every 15 minutes from 7am to midnight, with round-trip tickets costing HK$30 (US$3.90) for adults and HK$9 (US$1.15) for children. You can also use an Octopus card.

BY STAR FERRY A trip across Victoria Harbour on one of the white-and-green ferries of the Star Ferry Company is one of the most celebrated rides in the world. Carrying passengers back and forth between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon ever since 1898, these boats have come to symbolize Hong Kong itself.

The Star Ferry is very easy to ride. Simply drop your coins into a slot on the ancient-looking turnstile, follow the crowd in front of you down the ramp, walk over the gangway, and find a seat on one of the polished wooden benches. A whistle will blow, a man in a sailor uniform will haul up the gangway, and you're off, dodging fishing boats, tugboats, and barges as you make your way across the harbor.

The whole trip is much too short, about 7 minutes total from loading pier to unloading dock, with the ride across the harbor taking about 5 minutes. But that 5-minute ride is one of the best in the world, and it's also one of the cheapest. It costs only HK$1.70

(US20¢) for ordinary (second) class; if you really want to splurge, it's only HK$2.20 (US30¢) for first class. First class is located on the upper deck, and it has its own entryway and gangway (follow the signs in the ferry concourse); if it's raining or cold, first class is preferable because there are glass windows in the bow. Otherwise I find ordinary class much more colorful and entertaining because it's the one the locals use and the view of the harbor is often better.

Star Ferries ply the waters daily from 6:30am to 11:30pm between Hong Kong Island's Central District and the tip of Kowloon's Tsim Sha Tsui. Ferries depart every 3 to 5 minutes, except for early in the morning or late at night, when they leave every 10 minutes.

BY OTHER FERRIES Besides the Star Ferry, there are also many ferries to other parts of the city. There's hover-ferry service between Central and Tsim Sha Tsui East (near the Shangri-La Hotel), running at 20-minute intervals and costing HK$5.70 (US75¢). From Wan Chai, there's ferry service to Tsim Sha Tsui, running from 7:30am to 11pm and costing HK$2.20 (US30¢), and to Hung Hom, available from 7am to 7pm and costing HK$5.30 (US70¢).

In addition to ferries crossing the harbor between Kowloon and Hong Kong Island, a large fleet serves the many outlying islands and the northern part of the mainland. If you want to go to one of the outlying islands, you'll find that most of these ferries depart from the Outlying Islands Ferry Piers stretching west of the Star Ferry terminus in Central. Operated by the Hong Kong & Yaumati Ferry Company Ltd. (HKF), these boats vary in size; some even have outdoor deck areas in first class. The latest schedules and fares are available from the Hong Kong Tourist Board (HKTB). One thing to keep in mind is that on the weekends the ferries are unbelievably crowded with locals who want to escape the city. And on weekends the fares are higher, so it's best to travel on a weekday. Even so, the most you'll ever pay for a ferry, even on deluxe class on a weekend, is HK$31 (US$4). You can use the Octopus card on most ferries.

BY TAXI

REGULAR TAXIS As a rule, taxi drivers in Hong Kong are strictly controlled and are fairly honest. If they're free to pick up passengers, a red FOR HIRE flag will be raised in the windshield during the day and a lighted TAXI sign will be on the roof at night. You can hail them from the street, though there are some restricted areas, especially in Central. In addition, taxis are not allowed to stop on roads with a single yellow line between 7am and 7pm; they are not

allowed to stop at all on roads with a double yellow line. Probably the easiest place to pick up a taxi is on side streets, at a taxi stand (located at all bus terminals), or at a hotel. Taxis are generally abundant anytime except when it's raining, during rush hour (about 5–8pm), during shift change (usually around 4pm), and on horse-racing days from September to May. Since many drivers do not speak English, it's a good idea to have your destination written in Chinese.

Taxis on Hong Kong Island and Kowloon are red. Fares start at HK$15 (US$1.95) for the first 2km (1¼ miles), then are HK$1.40 (US18¢) for each additional 200m (about 275 yards). Waiting time, incorporated in the meter, is HK$1.40 (US20¢) per minute, luggage costs an extra HK$5 (US65¢) per piece, and taxis ordered by phone add a HK$5 (US65¢) surcharge. Extra charges, which include the driver's return trip, are also permitted for trips through tunnels: HK$20 (US$2.60) for the Cross-Harbour Tunnel, HK$30 (US$3.90) for the Eastern Harbour Crossing, HK$45 (US$5.85) for the Western Harbour Tunnel, and HK$5 (US65¢) for the Aberdeen Tunnel. Note, too, that there's an additional charge per bird or animal you might want to bring with you in the taxi! For a tip, simply round off your bill to the nearest HK$1 or add a HK$1. Although taxi drivers can service both sides of Victoria Harbour, they tend to stick to a certain neighborhood and often aren't familiar with anything outside their area.

MAXICABS & MINIBUSES These small, 16-passenger buses are the poor person's taxis; although they are quite useful for the locals, they're a bit confusing for tourists. For one thing, although the destination may be written in both Chinese and English, you almost need a magnifying glass to read the English, and by then the vehicle has probably already whizzed by. Even if you can read the English, you may not know the bus's route or where it's going.

There are two types of vehicles, distinguishable by color. The green-and-yellow ones, called **maxicabs,** follow fixed routes and charge fixed rates ranging from HK$2 to HK$23 (US25¢–US$3), depending on the distance, and require the exact fare as you enter. The most useful ones on Hong Kong Island are probably those that depart from the Star Ferry concourse for Bowen Road and Ocean Park, as well as those that travel from Central's Lung Wui Road to Victoria Peak. In Kowloon, you can ride from the Star Ferry concourse in a maxicab to the Tsim Sha Tsui East shopping district.

The red-and-yellow **minibuses** are a lot more confusing, because they have no fixed route and will stop when you hail them from the

street (except for some restricted areas in Central). However, they're useful for traveling along Nathan Road or between Central and Causeway Bay. Fares range from HK$2 to HK$20 (US25¢–US$2.60), depending on the distance and demand (higher fares are charged on rainy days, race days, or cross-harbor trips), and you pay as you exit. Just yell when you want to get off.

BY CAR

Cars are not advisable in Hong Kong and hardly anyone uses them, even businesspeople. For one thing, nothing is so far away that you can't get there easily, quickly, and cheaply by taxi or public transport. In addition, there probably won't be any place to park once you get to your destination. If you're still determined to rent a car or plan to take a driving tour of the New Territories, self-drive firms — such as Avis and Hertz — have branches here, along with a couple of dozen local firms. A valid driver's license is required, and, remember, traffic flows on the left-hand side of the street. You can reach Avis by calling ✆ **852/2576 6831** and Hertz at ✆ **852/2525 2838.**

BY RICKSHAW

Rickshaws hit the streets of Hong Kong in the 1870s and were once the most common form of transport in the colony. Now, however, they are almost a thing of the past — no new licenses are being issued. A couple of ancient-looking men sometimes hang around the Star Ferry terminal in the Central District, but they're usually either snoozing or reading the paper. They make money by charging up to HK$50 (US$6.50) for tourists who want to take their pictures. If you do want to take a ride, they'll charge up to HK$100 (US$13) to take you around the block, clearly the most expensive form of transportation in Hong Kong, and by their appearance, that's probably about as far as they can go. But whether you're just taking a photograph or going for a ride, negotiate the price first.

ON FOOT

One of the great things about Hong Kong is that you can explore virtually the entire city proper on foot. You can walk from the Central District all the way through Wan Chai to Causeway Bay in about an hour or so, while the half-hour walk up Nathan Road to Yau Ma Tei is recommended to all visitors.

In the Central District, there are mazes of covered, elevated walkways to separate pedestrians from traffic, connecting office buildings, shopping complexes, and hotels. In fact, some roads have

no pedestrians because they're all using overhead passageways. You can, for example, walk from the Star Ferry concourse to the Prince's Building, Alexandra House, and Landmark all via covered bridges. Likewise, you can walk from the Star Ferry concourse all the way to the Macau Ferry Pier via a walkway. These walkways can be confusing, though signs direct pedestrians to major buildings. Tourists will probably find streets easier to navigate if using a map, but walkways are convenient when it rains and are safer, since the walkways separate pedestrians from traffic.

FAST FACTS: Hong Kong

American Express There are two American Express offices, located on both sides of Victoria Harbour. On Hong Kong Island, you'll find an American Express on the first floor of the Henley Building, 5 Queen's Rd. Central, in the Central District (✆ **852/2110 2008**). In Tsim Sha Tsui, it's at 48 Cameron Rd. (✆ **852/2926 1606**). Both offices are open Monday to Friday from 9am to 6pm and Saturday from 9am to 12:30pm.

Bookstores There are lots of English-language bookstores, particularly in Central and Tsim Sha Tsui. Ask your hotel concierge for the one nearest you. Otherwise, one of the largest is **Pageone,** with two locations, at Shop 3002, Zone A, Harbour City, Canton Road, Tsim Sha Tsui (✆ **852/2730 6080**), open daily from 10am to 8pm; and in Basement One of Times Square, 1 Matheson St., Causeway Bay (✆ **852/2506 0381**), open daily from 10:30am to 10pm.

Business Hours Although open hours can vary among banks, banking hours are generally Monday to Friday from 9am to 4:30pm and Saturday from 9am to 12:30pm.

Most business offices are open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm, with lunch hour from 1 to 2pm; Saturday business hours are generally 9am to 1pm.

Most shops are open 7 days a week. Shops in the Central District are generally open from 10am to 7pm; in Causeway Bay and Wan Chai, 10am to 9:30pm; and in Tsim Sha Tsui, 10am to 9 or 10pm (and some even later than that). As for bars, most stay open until at least 2am; some stay open until the crack of dawn.

Car Rentals See "Getting Around," earlier in this chapter.

Climate See "When to Go," in chapter 1.

Currency See "Money," in chapter 1.

Currency Exchange When exchanging money in Hong Kong, you'll get the best rate at banks. The exchange rate can vary among banks, however, so it may pay to shop around if you're exchanging a large amount. Some banks, for example, offer a better exchange rate but charge a commission of about HK$50 to HK$60 (US$6.50–US$7.80); others many not charge commission but have lower rates. Most charge a commission on traveler's checks (unless, of course, you're cashing American Express checks at an American Express office), but the exchange rate is usually better for traveler's checks than cash. Major banks are open Monday to Friday from 9am to 4:30pm and Saturday from 9am to 12:30pm. The **Hang Seng Bank,** which I find offers good exchange rates (but does charge a commission), has branches virtually everywhere, including a convenient location next to Kowloon Hotel at 4 Hankow Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (✆ **852/2198 0575**).

There are also ATMs throughout Hong Kong, including MTR subway stations and the Star Ferry concourse in Tsim Sha Tsui. The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation and Hang Seng Banks have ATMs open 24 hours for Visa and MasterCard holders. American Express cardholders have access to Jetco ATMs and card machines located at both American Express offices (see "American Express," above).

Documents See "Entry Requirements & Customs," in chapter 1.

Drugstores There are no 24-hour drugstores in Hong Kong, so if you need something urgently in the middle of the night, you should contact one of the hospitals listed below. One of the best-known pharmacies in Hong Kong is **Watson's,** which dates back to the 1880s. Today, there are more than 90 Watson's drugstores in Hong Kong, most of them open from 9am to 10pm. Ask the concierge at your hotel for the location of a Watson's or drugstore nearest you.

Electricity The electricity used in Hong Kong is 220 volts, alternating current (AC), 50 cycles (in the U.S. it's 110 volts and 60 cycles). Most hotels are equipped to fit shavers of different plugs and voltages, but for other gadgets, you'll need transformers and plug adapters (Hong Kong outlets take plugs with three rectangular prongs). Most laptop computers nowadays are equipped to deal with both 110 and 220 volts,

though you'll still need a prong adapter (ask your hotel whether they have one you can use).

Emergencies All emergency calls are free — just dial ✆ **999** for police, fire, or ambulance.

Hospitals The following hospitals can help you around the clock: Queen Mary Hospital, 102 Pokfulam Rd., Hong Kong Island (✆ **852/2855 3111**); and Queen Elizabeth Hospital, 30 Gascoigne Rd., Kowloon (✆ **852/2958 8888**).

Internet Access All upper-range and most medium-priced hotels in Hong Kong are equipped with some sort of Internet access. Check what your hotel's facilities, policies, and fees are when you're making your reservation.

Outside hotels, **Shadowman,** 7 Lock Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (✆ **852/2366 5262**), across from the Hyatt Regency, is a small cybercafe with a half-dozen computers, providing free Internet access for 20 minutes with the purchase of a drink or food and charging HK$10 (US$1.30) per 15 minutes beyond that. It's open daily from 8am to midnight. **Itfans,** 12–13 Jubilee St., Central (near Central Market and the Hong Kong Tourist Board), is open 24 hours with 100 computers, charging HK$18 (US$2.35) an hour Monday through Saturday and HK$12 (US$1.55) per hour Sunday and holidays, plus a HK$10 (US$1.30) membership fee.

Languages Despite the fact that English is an official language and is spoken in hotels and tourist shops, few Chinese outside these areas understand it. Bus drivers, taxi drivers, and waiters in many Chinese restaurants do not speak English and will simply shrug their shoulders to your query. To avoid confusion, have someone in your hotel write out your destination in Chinese so that you can show it to your taxi or bus driver. Most Chinese restaurants — and all those listed in this book — have English menus. If you need assistance, try asking younger Chinese, since it's more likely that they will have studied English in school.

Mail Most hotels have stamps and can mail your letters for you. Otherwise, there are plenty of post offices throughout the SAR. Most are open Monday to Friday from 9:30am to 5pm and Saturday from 9:30am to 1pm. The main post office is on Hong Kong Island at 2 Connaught Place, in the Central District near the Star Ferry concourse (✆ **852/2921 2222**), where you'll find stamps sold on the first floor (what those

from the U.S. would call the second floor). On the Kowloon side, the main post office is at 10 Middle Rd., which is 1 block north of Salisbury Road (✆ **852/2366 4111**). Both are open Monday to Saturday from 8am to 6pm and Sunday from 8am to 2pm.

Police You can reach the police for an emergency by dialing ✆ **999,** the same number as for a fire or an ambulance. This is a free call.

Safety The SAR is relatively safe for the visitor, especially if you use common sense and stick to such well-traveled nighttime areas as Tsim Sha Tsui, Lan Kwai Fong, or Causeway Bay. The main thing you must guard against is pickpockets. To be on the safe side, keep your valuables in your hotel's safe-deposit box. If you need to carry your passport or large amounts of money, it's a good idea to conceal everything in a money belt.

Taxes Hotels will add a 10% service charge and a 3% government tax to your bill. Restaurants and bars will automatically add a 10% service charge, but there is no tax. There's an airport departure tax of HK$80 (US$10) for adults and children older than 12, but this is usually — though not always — included in your ticket price.

Telephone The international country code for Hong Kong is 852.

In Hong Kong, local calls made from homes, offices, shops, restaurants, and some hotel lobbies are free, so don't feel shy about asking to use the phone. From hotel lobbies and public phone booths, a local call costs HK$1 (US15¢) for each 5 minutes; from hotel rooms, about HK$4 to HK$5 (US50¢–US65¢). For directory assistance (free and in English), dial ✆ **1081** for local numbers, ✆ **10013** for international inquiries.

Most hotels in Hong Kong offer direct dialing. Otherwise, long-distance calls can be made from specially marked International Dialing Direct (IDD) public phones. The cheapest and most convenient method of making international calls is to use a PhoneCard, which comes in denominations ranging from HK$50 to HK$300 (US$6.50–US$39) and is available at HKTB information offices, 7-Eleven convenience stores, machines located beside telephones, and other locations around Hong Kong.

To make a direct-dial international call, dial ✆ **001,** followed by the country code. Country codes include 1 for the

United States and Canada, 44 for the United Kingdom, 61 for Australia, and 64 for New Zealand. For a direct-dial call to the United States, for example, dial ✆ 001-1-area code-telephone number, which costs approximately HK$6.80 (US90¢) per minute.

Time Zone Hong Kong is 8 hours ahead of Greenwich mean time, 13 hours ahead of New York, 14 hours ahead of Chicago, and 16 hours ahead of Los Angeles. Since Hong Kong does not have a daylight saving time, subtract 1 hour from the above times if you're calling the United States in the summer.

Tipping Even though restaurants and bars will automatically add a 10% service charge to your bill, you're still expected to leave small change for the waiter. A general rule of thumb is to leave 5%, but in most Chinese restaurants where meals are usually inexpensive, it's acceptable to leave change up to HK$5 (US65¢). In the finest restaurants, you should leave 10%.

You're also expected to tip taxi drivers, bellhops, barbers, and beauticians. For taxi drivers, simply round up your bill to the nearest HK$1 or add a HK$1 (US15¢) tip. Tip people who cut your hair 5% or 10%, and give bellhops HK$10 to HK$20 (US$1.30–US$2.60), depending on the number of your bags. If you use a public restroom with an attendant, you may be expected to leave a small gratuity — HK$2 (US25¢) should be enough. In addition, chambermaids and room attendants are usually given about 2% of the room charge.

Toilets The best places to track down public facilities in Hong Kong are its many hotels. Fast-food restaurants and shopping malls are other good bets. There may be an attendant on hand, who will expect a small tip of about HK$2 (US25¢). Note that there are no public facilities at any of the MTR subway stations. Hotels and tourist sites usually have Western toilets, but you may encounter Chinese toilets on ferries and on the islands.

Water It's considered safe to drink urban tap water, though most people prefer bottled water, which is widely available. In summer it's wise to carry bottled water with you. Some hotels have their own purification systems. I always drink the water, and have never gotten ill. If you travel into rural Hong Kong or China, however, drink only bottled water.

3

Where to Stay

For many years, hotel managers in Hong Kong were in the enviable position of having too many guests and not enough rooms to accommodate them. High demand and low supply caused hotel prices to skyrocket in the 1980s and most of the 1990s — many hotels raised their rates a whopping 15% to 20% a year. To keep up with the demand, new hotels mushroomed. In December 1985 there were 18,180 hotel rooms in Hong Kong; by the end of 1997, the number had swelled to an incredible 33,425.

But then came the 1997 handover, the Asian financial crisis, and more recently, a general decline in long-distance travel following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States. Although increased tourism from mainland China has taken up much of the slack, hotels have had to change their tune and work hard to lure customers — many have kept the same rates for several years running; upper-end hotels may offer special packages, including weekend getaways, off-season incentives, and upgrades; and lower-end hotels have been offering special promotional rates that are often valid through most of the year. From the bargain hunter's point of view, there has never been a better time to visit Hong Kong.

Still, hotels are not cheap in the SAR, especially when compared with those in many other Asian cities. Rather, prices are similar to what you'd pay in major U.S. and European cities, and while US$150 might get you the best room in town in Topeka, Kansas, in Hong Kong it will get you a small, undistinguished box not unlike a highway motel room. In other words, except for the cost of getting to Hong Kong, your biggest expenditure is going to be for a place to stay.

Although tourism is down, with hotel occupancy usually hovering around 79%, you should always book rooms well in advance, especially if you have a particular hotel, location, or price category in mind. The SAR's biggest hotel crunches traditionally occur twice a year, during Hong Kong's most clement weather: in March and April and again in October and November. In addition, major trade fairs at Hong Kong's expanded convention center can wreak havoc

Choosing a Place to Stay

No one area in this compact city is really a more convenient location than any other. Public transportation is efficient and easy to use, and the attractions are spread throughout the city. However, most visitors do stay in Tsim Sha Tsui, on the Kowloon side, simply because that's where you'll find the greatest concentration of hotels, as well as shops and restaurants. Business travelers often prefer the Central District, while those who want to avoid the tourist crowds may like the hotels strung along the waterfront of Wan Chai and Causeway Bay. Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok, situated on the Kowloon Peninsula north of Tsim Sha Tsui, are great places to stay if you want to be surrounded by Chinese stores and locals, with hardly a souvenir shop in sight. See "Neighborhoods in Brief," beginning on p. 22, for more information on these neighborhoods.

on travelers who arrive without reservations — on one of my visits, Hong Kong's hotels were fully booked. Unsurprisingly, prices are highest during peak season. While bargains are abundant during the off seasons, many hotels use their published rack rates during peak season and major trade fairs.

As for trends in the hotel industry, Hong Kong's biggest markets nowadays are business travelers and group tours, primarily from mainland China. This translates into crowded elevators and lobbies in the moderately priced hotels that Chinese tour groups frequent. Hotels catering to executive-level business travelers, meanwhile, have beefed up business services, from state-of-the-art business centers to in-room dataports for computer hookups, dedicated phone lines, and even fax machines or TVs with keyboards that double as computers for Internet access.

Hotels have also improved services and in-room amenities, so that even moderately priced rooms nowadays have hair dryers, room safes, and often cable or satellite TVs with in-house pay movies, as well as coffee/tea-making facilities. No-smoking floors are common in virtually all hotels now except for some of the inexpensive ones. Most hotels also have tour desks or can book tours for you through the concierge or front desk.

Unless otherwise stated, all hotels in this book have air-conditioning (a must in Hong Kong), private bathrooms, telephones with international direct dialing, and usually a minibar or empty fridge you can stock yourself. Room service (either 24 hr. or until the wee hours of the morning), babysitting, and same-day laundry service are standard features of very expensive to moderate hotels, as are Western and Asian restaurants and business centers. Many also offer health clubs with swimming pools free for guests (though a few charge extra for their use).

Some hotels even differentiate among their guests, charging health-club fees, for example, for those who book through a travel agent but not for those who pay rack rates (the maximum quoted rates). Guests booking through travel agents may also receive fewer amenities. Note that while many hotels allow children under a specific age to room free with parents, there are restrictions. Some allow only one child, while others allow a maximum of three people in a room. Virtually all will charge extra if an extra bed is required.

It's nearly impossible to predict what might happen in the next few years. In 1997, it was expected that some 40 new hotels would open by the year 2000, pushing the number of rooms to 48,172. Instead, 36,438 rooms were available, with 45,000 expected by the end of 2004. Only one thing is certain: If the tourists do come back, hotels will be the first to happily raise their rates.

PRICE CATEGORIES

The hotel prices listed in this book are the rack rates, which you might end up paying if you come during peak season (Chinese New Year, Mar/Apr, Oct/Nov). Otherwise, you can probably get a room for much less. It's *imperative,* therefore, to ask about special packages, upgrades, or promotional fares when making reservations, particularly in the off season. Although I've included toll-free numbers for the United States and Canada for many of the listings below, I also recommend contacting the hotels directly to inquire about rates and special deals, and checking the hotel's website for deals that might be offered only through the Internet.

Generally speaking, the price of a room in Hong Kong depends upon its view and height rather than upon its size. Not surprisingly, the best and most expensive rooms are those with a sweeping view of Victoria Harbour, as well as those on the higher floors. Is a harbor view worth it? Emphatically, yes. Hong Kong's harbor, with watercraft activity ranging from cruise ships and barges to fishing boats and the Star Ferry, is one of the most fascinating in the world;

the city's high-rises and mountains are icing on the cake. Waking in the morning and opening your curtains to this famous scene is a thrill. Hotels know it, which is why they charge an arm and a leg for the privilege. There are, however, a few moderately priced accommodations that offer harbor views, though these, too, represent their most expensive rooms.

In any case, don't be shy about asking what price categories are available and what the differences are among them. Keep in mind that the difference in price between a room facing inland and a room facing the harbor can be staggering, with various price categories in between. There are, for example, "partial" or "side" harbor views, which means you can glimpse the harbor looking sideways from your window or between tall buildings. To save money, consider requesting the highest room available in the category you choose. If "standard" rooms, for example, run up to the 8th floor and deluxe rooms are on floors 9 to 20, you'll save money by asking for a standard room on floor 8. If you decide to spring for a full harbor view, be sure to ask for it when making your reservation, and request the highest floor available.

For moderately priced or inexpensive lodgings, few of which offer any kind of view at all, rates are usually based on height, decor, and sometimes size, and it's prudent to inquire whether there's a difference in price between twin and double rooms; some hotels charge more for two beds in a room (more sheets to wash, I guess).

In any case, the wide range of prices listed below for double rooms in each of the listings reflects the various categories available. In moderately priced and inexpensive lodgings, single rates are also usually available, but more expensive hotels often charge the same for double or single occupancy.

All of Hong Kong's expensive hotels, most of the moderately priced hotels, and a few of the inexpensive hotels are members of the Hong Kong Hotels Association (HKHA; www.hkha.org/), though not every hotel named in this chapter is. The advantage of staying at a member hotel is that if you have a complaint, you can lodge it directly with the Hong Kong Tourist Board. Furthermore, the HKHA maintains a counter at Hong Kong International Airport where you can reserve a room at one of its member hotels at no extra charge.

The hotels in this chapter are arranged first by price and then by geographical location. The categories are based on rates for a double room (excluding tax and service) as follows: **Very Expensive,** HK$3,000 (US$390) and up; **Expensive,** HK$2,000 to HK$2,999 (US$260 to US$389); **Moderate,** HK$1,000 to HK$1,999

(US$130 to US$259); and **Inexpensive,** less than HK$1,000 (US$130).

Keep in mind that prices given in this book are for room rates only — a 10% service charge and 3% government tax will be added to your final bill. Since a 13% increase can really add up, be sure to take it into account when choosing your hotel.

1 Very Expensive

Hong Kong's top hotels are among the best in the world, with unparalleled service, state-of-the-art business and health-club facilities, guest rooms equipped with just about everything you can imagine, some of the city's best restaurants, and views of famous Victoria Harbour. They also offer the convenience of a concierge or guest-relations staff, on hand to help with everything from theater tickets to restaurant and tour reservations. Among other extras are turn-down service, 24-hour room service, welcoming tea brought to your room shortly after your arrival, free newspaper delivered to your room, and many in-room conveniences and amenities, including voice mail and bedside controls that regulate everything from do-not-disturb lights to the opening of the curtains. Many also offer executive floors, a "hotel-within-a-hotel" concept catering primarily to business executives with such added services as express check-in and checkout; use of a private executive lounge serving complimentary breakfasts, snacks, and drinks; free services that may include complimentary pressing service or free use of the business center; and an executive-floor concierge or attendant who can take care of such details as restaurant reservations, theater bookings, or transportation arrangements.

Kowloon

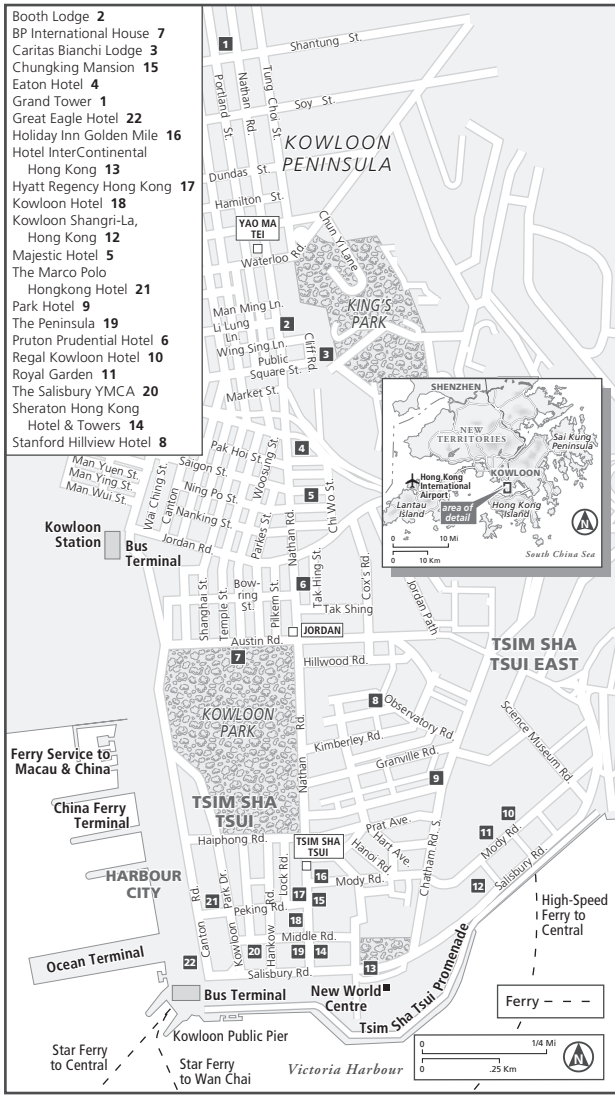
Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong (formerly The Regent Hong Kong) ★★★ It was no small shock when this famous property became the flagship InterContinental in 2001, but management has taken great pains to assure continuity, maintaining the same staff, calling in the hotel's original design team to create a more contemporary look, and even employing masters of *fung shui* (geomancy) to insure architectural harmony with nature. While some may rue the demise of The Regent's fabled fleet of Daimler limousines and the acclaimed Plume restaurant, the InterContinental has thankfully shed the former hotel's exclusivity that bordered on the snobbish. With half its guests hailing from North America, the InterContinental seems more relaxed and more egalitarian than its

predecessor ever did. And it still has what made this property so beloved in the first place: what may well be the best views of Victoria Harbour from Tsim Sha Tsui. In fact, you can't get much closer to the water than this — built in 1981 of polished rose granite and rising 17 stories, the hotel is located on the water's edge on a projection of reclaimed land.

Great views are trademarks of its unfussy lobby with its soaring glass facade and most of its rooms, 70% of which command sweeping views of the harbor with floor-to-ceiling and wall-to-wall windows (the remaining — and less expensive — rooms face the outdoor swimming pool and landscaped sun terrace). Even the outdoor pool's sun terrace and whirlpools overlook the harbor. Notable features of the hotel are its spacious bathrooms, each fitted in Italian marble with a sunken bathtub, separate shower unit, adjoining walk-in closets; an air purification system in all guest rooms; a spa renowned for its jet-lag and Oriental healing treatments; and wireless broadband that enables guests to access the Internet even from poolside.

18 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/327-0200** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2721 1211. Fax 852/2739 4546. www.interconti.com. 514 units. HK$3,100–HK$4,500 (US$403–US$584) single or double; HK$700 (US$91) extra for Club Floors; from HK$5,500 (US$714) junior suite. Children under 18 stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants (seafood, Cantonese, steaks, Continental); bar; lounge; outdoor pool and whirlpools overlooking Victoria Harbour; fitness room (open 24 hr.); spa; concierge; limousine service; business center; upscale shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; massage; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; executive-level rooms; house doctor. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, wireless broadband service, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, bathroom scale, complimentary welcoming tea, fruit, and bottled water.

The Peninsula ★★★ *Finds* This is Hong Kong's most famous hotel, *the* place to stay if you are an incurable romantic, have a penchant for the historical, and can afford its high prices. Built in 1928, it exudes elegance from its white-gloved doormen to one of the largest limousine fleets of Rolls-Royces in the world. Its lobby, reminiscent of a Parisian palace with high gilded ceilings, pillars, and palms, has long been Hong Kong's foremost spot for afternoon tea and people-watching. Its restaurants are also among the city's best. After The Peninsula lost its fabled view of the harbor following construction of the unsightly Space Museum on reclaimed land across the street, it remedied the problem in 1993 with the completion of a magnificent 32-story tower, providing fantastic harbor views from guest rooms and its top-floor restaurant Felix, designed by Philippe Starck.



Spacious rooms, so wonderfully equipped that even jaded travelers are likely to be impressed — are all equipped with a silent fax machine with a personalized phone number; a telephone that shows

Fun Fact **You've Got to Be Kidding!**

The Chinnery, a bar in the Mandarin Oriental hotel with more than 100 single-malt whiskies, remained off-limits to women until, incredibly enough, 1990.

time around the world, automatically displaying the time in your home country; headphones for both radio and TV; extremely focused bedside reading lights designed to keep sleeping partners happy; a display panel showing outdoor temperature and humidity; and a box in the closet where attendants can place your morning newspaper or take your dirty shoes for complimentary cleaning. Each huge bathroom is equipped with its own TV, hands-free phone, mood lighting, separate bathtub and shower stall, and two sinks, both with a magnifying mirror. It may be worth the extra money to spring for a stunning harbor view in the tower, since views facing the back are a disappointment and those in the older part of the hotel are marred by the Space Museum. Additionally, the Star Ferry is just a short walk away.

Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/462-7899** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2920 2888. Fax 852/2722 4170. www.peninsula.com. 300 units. HK$3,000–HK$4,900 (US$390–US$637) single or double; from HK$5,600 (US$727) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 6 restaurants (French, Pacific Rim crossover, Continental, Swiss, Cantonese, Japanese); 2 bars; lounge; gorgeous indoor pool with sun terrace overlooking the harbor; health club; spa; concierge; limousine service; business center; designer-brand shopping arcade; salon; 24-hr. room service; massage; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; in-house nurse. *In room:* A/C, cable/satellite TV with CD/DVD player (free CDs and movies available), fax, dataport, minibar, hair dryer, safe, bathroom scale, complimentary welcoming tea and fruit.

Central District

Mandarin Oriental ★★ With so many newer hotels on Hong Kong Island, the Mandarin, a 25-story landmark built in 1963, seems like a familiar old-timer. Truth be told, it's starting to look like an old-timer as well, with an exterior that is increasingly showing its age and verging on the shabby and a lobby that seems dated. Still, the Mandarin is famed for its service and is consistently rated as one of the top hotels in the world. Because of its great location in the heart of Hong Kong's business district (not far from Star Ferry), it attracts mostly a business clientele. For tourists, one advantage to staying in Central is that you're surrounded mostly by people who actually live and work in Hong Kong, as opposed to Tsim Sha Tsui,

which is crowded largely with other tourists. In addition, the Mandarin's restaurants are among the best in Hong Kong, but its indoor pool is disappointingly small. Rooms, on the small side and

decorated in an Asian theme with an understated elegance, come mostly with balconies (rare in Hong Kong and, admittedly, a bit noisy) and face either the harbor or inland — those facing the harbor even come with binoculars. Rooms feature all the amenities and facilities you could possibly want, including a keyboard that allows you to connect to the Internet through your TV and purified tap water for drinking, but if you are still in need of something, the staff will make every effort to fulfill your wishes.

5 Connaught Rd., Central, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/526-6566** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2522 0111. Fax 852/2810 6190. www.mandarinoriental.com. 541 units. HK$2,950–HK$4,200 (US$383–US$545) single; HK$3,200–HK$4,450 (US$416–US$578) double; from HK$5,500 (US$714) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Central. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants (Continental, Franco-Asian, Cantonese, coffee shop); 3 bars; lounge; indoor pool; health club (open 24 hr.); Jacuzzi; sauna; concierge; tour desk; limousine service; business center; shopping arcade; salon; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; Cuban-style cigar divan. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies and Internet keyboard, dataport, minibar, hair dryer, safe, bathroom scale, complimentary welcoming tea, fruit, and shoeshine.

The Ritz-Carlton ★★★ *Kids* Opened in 1993, the Ritz-Carlton occupies a smart-looking 25-story building in the heart of the Central District not far from the waterfront and Star Ferry. It follows the Ritz-Carlton tradition of excellent service and fine dining and has an extensive collection of 18th- and 19th-century artwork and antiques. Its lobby is subdued and intimate, resembling more closely a wealthy person's home than a public place, with the reception desk tucked away in an alcove. All in all, the hotel, with its hushed, home-away-from-home atmosphere, is a far cry from the crowds at Hong Kong's more plebeian megahotels. Even the restaurants seem discreetly hidden, most without views so as to discourage outside traffic.

The low-key atmosphere prevails upstairs as well; since there are only 10 to 12 rooms on each floor, it seems more like an upscale apartment complex than a hotel, which obviously appeals to its overwhelmingly business clientele, many of whom are long-staying guests. Yet the hotel doesn't overlook its wee guests either, installing safety devices such as electric outlet plugs for families with preschoolers. The rooms are rather neutral in tone with an understated elegance, with half facing the harbor and offering great views; even those that face inland provide a nice view of the lush Chater Garden and The Peak. Marble bathrooms feature two sinks and separate toilet areas; flowers are a nice touch. Two floors are designed with business travelers in mind, complete with computers hooked up to the Internet, faxes, printers, and scanners.

3 Connaught Rd., Central, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/241-3333** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2877 6666. Fax 852/2877 6778. www.ritzcarlton.com. 216 units. HK$3,200–HK$3,600 (US$416–US$467) single or double; HK$3,800–HK$4,200 (US$493–US$545) Ritz-Carlton Club executive floor; from HK$7,800 (US$1,013) suite. Children under 13 stay free in parent's room (maximum 3 persons per room). AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Central. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants (Italian, Cantonese, Shanghainese, Japanese, Continental); bar; lounge; heated outdoor pool; health club; Jacuzzi; sauna; concierge; limousine service; business center; 24-hr. room service; massage (including in-room); babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, cable/satellite TV w/pay movies, dataport, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, bathroom scale, complimentary welcome tea, fruit, bottled water, and shoeshine.

Causeway Bay & Wan Chai

Grand Hyatt Hong Kong ★★★★ *Kids* In a city with so many first-class hotels and such stiff competition, sooner or later a hotel had to exceed all the others in opulence and grandeur. Walking into the lobby of the Hyatt International's Asian flagship hotel is like walking into the Bavarian castle of a modern-day King Ludwig, a lobby so palatial in design that the word "understatement" has certainly never crossed its threshold. Decorated to resemble the salon of a 1930s Art Deco luxury ocean liner, it literally flaunts space, with huge black granite columns, massive flower arrangements, palm trees, bubbling fountains, and furniture and statuettes reminiscent of that era. Not the kind of place you want to be seen on a bad hair day.

Located on the waterfront near the Convention Centre and only a 5-minute walk from the Wan Chai Star Ferry pier that delivers passengers to Tsim Sha Tsui, it offers smart-looking, contemporary rooms, soothingly decorated to ease stress and invite relaxation. Pluses are the specially made beds with Egyptian cotton sheets, sliding clothes rack in the closet, cordless keyboards to access the Internet through an interactive TV, coffee-table books, and marble bathrooms complete with 18-karat-gold fixtures and separate bathtub and shower areas. Some 70% of the rooms provide a harbor view, while the rest have a view of the free-form pool (Hong Kong's largest outdoor hotel pool) and garden with partial glimpses of the harbor. With all this hotel has to offer, little wonder former President Clinton chose the hotel's presidential suite during his 1998 visit (you, too, can stay there for "just" HK$25,400/US$3,302 a night).

1 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/233-1234** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2588 1234. Fax 852/2802 0677. www.hongkong.hyatt.com. 572 units. HK$3,600–HK$4,300 (US$467–US$558) single; HK$3,850–HK$4,550 (US$500–US$584) double; HK$4,350–HK$4,650 (US$566–US$604) Regency Club executive-

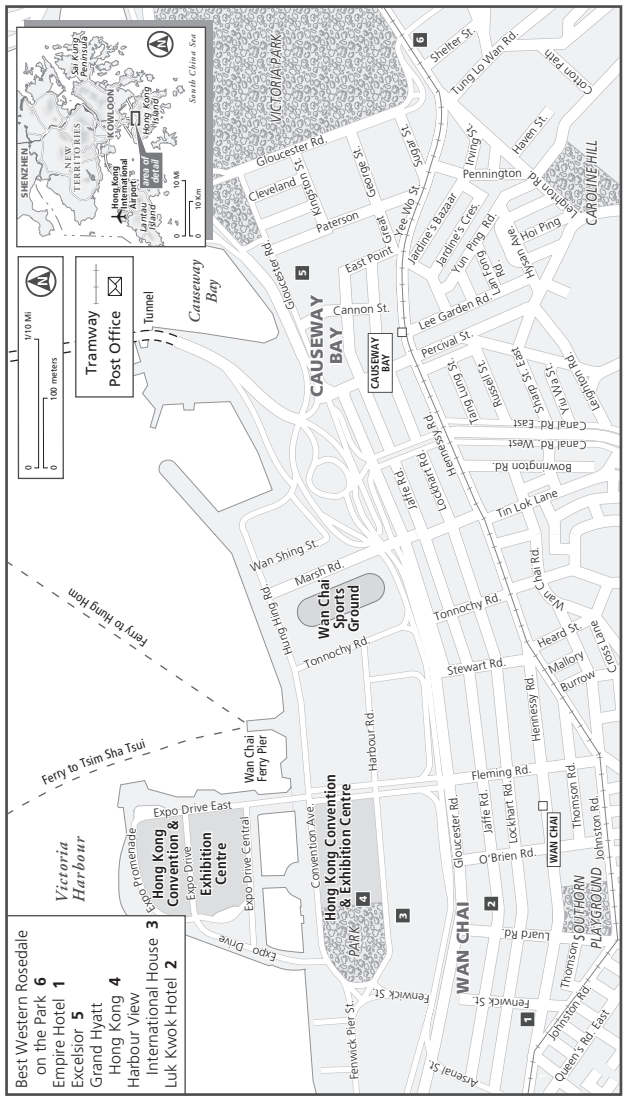
floor double; from HK$6,400 (US$831) suite. Children under 12 stay free in parent's room (maximum 3 persons per room). AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Wan Chai. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants (Italian, Cantonese, Continental, Japanese); lounge; nightclub; huge outdoor pool (shared with adjacent Renaissance Harbour View Hotel and closed in winter); children's splash pool; golf-driving range; 2 outdoor tennis courts; health club; jogging track; concierge; tour desk; limousine service; business center; salon; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; executive-level rooms; free shuttle to Central, Causeway Bay, and Admiralty. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/keyboard for Internet access and on-demand pay movies, fax, data-port; minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, bathroom scale, complimentary bottled water.

2 Expensive

Many expensive hotels offer almost as much as Hong Kong's very expensive hotels, though only a handful have great views of Victoria Harbour. In this category, you can expect a guest-relations/concierge desk, 24-hour room service, health clubs, business centers, same-day laundry service, and comfortable rooms with hair dryers, cable or satellite TVs with in-room movies, voice mail, and coffee/tea-making facilities. But since this category of hotels sometimes caters to large tour groups, they can also be noisier, with less personalized service than the deluxe hotels. On the other hand, many also have executive floors for business travelers.

Kowloon

Great Eagle Hotel ★★ This 16-story hotel is located a couple of blocks inland from the harbor, just a few minutes' walk from the Star Ferry and the huge Harbour City shopping complex, giving it a very convenient location. Unfortunately, none of its rooms have harbor views. Its lobby, bathed in warm gold tones, exudes a classic Italian atmosphere, with chandeliers, marble floor, a hand-painted dome ceiling, and glass art by American artist Dale Chihuly. It bills itself as an "intelligent" hotel, with bedside control panels that allow guests to operate lights, adjust air-conditioning levels, select a TV or radio program, call up messages or the hotel bill on the television screen, and switch on a "Do Not Disturb" light that automatically disconnects the door chime (I found the light controls a bit too confusing for my own intelligence, however). As an added safety precaution, staff keys are programmed for specific times only, thereby barring anyone from entering rooms after a shift ends. What's more, a printer records all hotel employee use, indicating when each key was used, where, and by whom. As if that weren't enough, the rooms are also equipped with electronic safes. Rooms are small but comfortable, with marble bathrooms sporting separate



showers and tubs and mist-free mirrors. More than half the hotel guests are from North America and Europe, while a third are from Japan.

8 Peking Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/457-4000** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2375 1133. Fax 852/2375 6611. www.gehotel.com. 488 units. HK$2,100–HK$2,400 (US$273–US$312) single; HK$2,300–HK$2,600 (US$299–US$338) double; HK$3,000–HK$3,400 (US$390–US$442) Club Floor double; from HK$4,000 (US$519) suite. Children under 12 stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants (Cantonese, seafood, international buffet, American deli); lounge; rooftop outdoor pool and Jacuzzi; health club (open 24 hr.); sauna; concierge; limousine service; business center; shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; massage; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; executive-level rooms; doctor on call. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/keyboard for Internet access (most rooms) and pay movies, dataport, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe.

Holiday Inn Golden Mile Named after the "golden mile of shopping" on Nathan Road, this Holiday Inn, built in 1975 but renovated many times over from top to bottom, has a great location right in the heart of bustling Tsim Sha Tsui, about a 6-minute walk from the Star Ferry. The MTR is right across the street. Maybe that's why it's popular with tour groups, mainly from Europe and North America, which can make the lobby rather crowded, noisy, and bothersome. Rooms are very clean, modern, and fairly large for Tsim Sha Tsui, featuring either a king-size bed or two double beds. Although boasting floor-to-ceiling windows, views are blocked by adjacent buildings; those facing the unsightly Chungking Mansion are glazed (believe me, it's better this way). Those facing Mody Road are brighter but noisier; try to get a room on a high floor. All in all, this is a functional hotel in a convenient location.

50 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/465-4329** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2369 3111. Fax 852/2369 8016. www.goldenmile.com. 600 units. HK$2,100–HK$2,650 (US$273–US$344) single; HK$2,500–HK$2,750 (US$325–US$357) twin; HK$3,000 (US$390) Executive Club double; from HK$5,800 (US$753) suite. Up to 2 children under 19 stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants (modern European, international buffet, Cantonese); bar; heated rooftop pool open year-round; health club; sauna; concierge; tour desk; limousine service; business center; shopping arcade; salon; 24-hr. room service; massage; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; executive-level rooms; house doctor. *In room:* A/C, satellite/cable TV w/pay movies, dataport (some rooms), minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, complimentary bottled water.

Hyatt Regency Hong Kong ★★ *Value* Established in 1969 as Hyatt's first property in Asia, this hotel occupies prime real estate on Nathan Road but unfortunately does not offer any harbor-view rooms or a swimming pool. However, it is the only Hong Kong hotel to offer floating rates that change according to season and demand (reflected in the price range below), making it a very good

value in the off season (for my money, in peak season, I'd rather spend it at a hotel with views of famous Victoria Harbour). It boasts a convenient location in the midst of Nathan Road's so-called "golden mile of shopping," just a 5-minute walk from the Star Ferry and a 1-minute walk from the Tsim Sha Tsui MTR subway station. Appealing to American business and leisure travelers, it has undergone extensive renovation through the decades as tastes have changed, getting rid of its flamboyant red-and-gold lobby so popular in the 1970s in favor of a subdued, more sophisticated marble-and-teakwood reception area reflective of 1990s taste, and decorated with Chinese antiques. Among my favorites in this hotel: a Chinese fortune-teller, palm, and face reader in residence in the lobby, and the fabulous late-night dessert buffet at Nathan's Restaurant and Bar. As for rooms, the lacquered Chinese chests housing the TVs and Chinese brush paintings on the walls represent hints of local culture. Rooms facing Nathan Road are equipped with double-glazed windows and insulated walls to reduce outside noise.

67 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/233-1234** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2311 1234. Fax 852/2739 8701. www.hongkong.hyatt.com. 723 units. HK$1,300–HK$2,100 (US$169–US$273) single; HK$1,500–HK$2,400 (US$195–US$312) double; HK$350 (US$45) supplement for Regency Club; from HK$1,800 (US$234) supplement for suite. Children under 12 stay free in parent's room (maximum 3 persons per room). AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants (Continental, Cantonese, international, international coffee shop); 2 bars; small exercise room; access to nearby health club; concierge; tour desk; limousine service; business center; shopping arcade; salon; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; executive-level rooms; house nurse. *In room:* A/C, satellite/cable TV w/pay movies, dataport, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe.

Kowloon Shangri-La, Hong Kong ★★★ *Finds* The 21-story Kowloon Shangri-La, on the waterfront of Tsim Sha Tsui East, is a popular choice for business travelers, the majority of whom are American. The well-trained staff provides sterling service, which is probably one reason why repeat guests number more than 40% of hotel occupancy. Another reason could be its restaurants: Margaux (French), Napa (Californian), and Shang Palace (Cantonese) are among my favorite hotel restaurants. The two-story lobby is one of the most spacious in Hong Kong, with an expansive white Carrara marble floor, massive Viennese crystal chandeliers, a fountain, and Chinese landscape murals. The hotel, just a minute's walk from the hover-ferry pier with service to Central, is within walking distance of Tsim Sha Tsui but something of a hike from the nearest MTR station. Rooms, offering either harbor views or rather mundane

"garden views" (a popular euphemism for windows that face inland), are large and luxuriously appointed, with ceiling-to-floor bay windows and either a king-size bed or two double beds. If you pay rack rates, additional benefits include free airport transfer, free laundry and dry-cleaning service, free American or continental breakfast, free local telephone calls, and a late 6pm checkout.

64 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/942-5050** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2721 2111. Fax 852/2723 8686. www.shangri-la.com. 725 units. HK$2,300–HK$3,350 (US$299–US$435) single; HK$2,500–HK$3,550 (US$325–US$461) double; HK$300 (US$39) Horizon Club executive-floor supplement; from HK$4,200 (US$545) suite. Children under 18 stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants (French, Californian, Cantonese, Japanese, international buffet); lounge; small indoor pool; health club; Jacuzzi; sauna; concierge; limousine service; business center (open 24 hr.); salon; 24-hr. room service; massage (including in-room); babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; executive-level rooms; house doctor. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/on-command pay movies, dataport, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, complimentary welcoming tea and shoeshine.

The Marco Polo Hongkong Hotel (formerly The Hongkong Hotel) A member of the Marco Polo Hotel group and the best of three Marco Polo properties lining this street, this hotel is as close as you can get to the Star Ferry and is connected via air-conditioned walkway to the largest shopping complex in Asia, Harbour City. It is also close to the China Hong Kong Terminal with departures for Macau. Built in the 1960s and well maintained, it has a marble lobby that is spacious and comfortable. Guest rooms, decorated in bold color schemes, are far from luxurious but are quite large and are mostly so-called "Hollywood" twins (two twin beds pushed together) with a sitting area, large working desks, and walk-in closet. The lowest-price rooms face the small courtyard swimming pool and other guest rooms and can be quite dark, while the most expensive rooms boast unparalleled views of harbor activity, including the ocean liners that dock right next door as well as evening sunsets.

Harbour City, 3 Canton Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/448-8355** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2113 0088. Fax 852/2113 0011. www.marcopolohotels.com. 665 units. HK$2,300–HK$3,530 (US$299–US$459) single; HK$2,400–HK$3,630 (US$312–US$472) double; HK$3,200–HK$4,270 (US$416–US$555) Continental Club executive-floor double; from HK$4,660 (US$605) suite. 1 child under 14 can stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants (Continental, Japanese, Chiu Chow, American, coffee shop); lounge; small outdoor pool; exercise room; spa; concierge; tour desk; limousine service; business center; shopping arcade; salon; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; executive-level rooms; doctor on call. *In room:* A/C, cable TV w/pay movies, dataport, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe.

Royal Garden ★★ *Finds* A small hotel with a lot of architectural surprises, the Royal Garden has always been one of my favorites. It features a cool, sleek lobby and a 15-story inner atrium, a concept adapted from the traditional Chinese inner garden. Plants hang down from balconies ringing the soaring space, glass-enclosed elevators glide up the wall, a piano sits on an island in the middle of a pool, and the sound of rushing water adds freshness and coolness to the atmosphere. A wonderful 25m-long (82 ft.) rooftop swimming pool is uncovered in summer, covered and heated in winter. Off the lobby is a very interesting martini bar, and its Italian restaurant, Sabatini, is one of Hong Kong's best. All in all, it's the kind of hotel that invites exploration. The rooms, the most expensive of which have partial harbor views between two buildings, are smartly decorated with a mix of colonial-style and modern furniture and feature a chilled, purified water tap in the bathroom. ("Partial harbor view" means either that other buildings are obstructing part of your view or that your windows do not squarely face the water.) Although a slight hike to the nearest MTR subway station (about 5 min.), it's only a minute's walk to the hover-ferry pier with service to Central.

69 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/44-UTELL** or 852/2721 5215. Fax 852/2369 9976. www.rghk.com.hk. 422 units. HK$2,100–HK$2,600 (US$273–US$338) single; HK$2,250–HK$2,750 (US$292–US$357) double; HK$2,950–HK$3,150 (US$383–US$409) Crown Club executive-floor double; from HK$3,850 (US$500) suite. 1 child under 12 can stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants (Italian, Cantonese, Continental, international buffet); 2 bars; lounge; heated rooftop outdoor/indoor pool and Jacuzzi; putting green; outdoor tennis court; exercise room; sauna; concierge; limousine service; business center; shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; massage; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, dataport, minibar, hair dryer, safe.

Sheraton Hong Kong Hotel & Towers ★★ *Value* The 20-some-year-old Sheraton has one of the most envied locations in Hong Kong — near the waterfront on the corner of Nathan Road and Salisbury Road — and is an easy walk to the subway and Star Ferry. In fact, it's such a choice spot that for years rumors buzzed that the Sheraton would close down to make way for a more lucrative office building. Instead, the Sheraton is undergoing massive renovations that have upgraded its facilities and image (and increased its room rates). Its lobby, previously plagued by overcrowding from locals who used it as a convenient waiting place to meet friends, was moved to the second floor to discourage foot traffic and was updated with a sleek, contemporary look graced by Asian motifs and subdued lighting. A plus is the outdoor rooftop

swimming pool, heated in winter, offering a spectacular view and more privacy than pools lower to the ground. Guest rooms, being renovated floor by floor at press time, are comfortable and range from those facing an inner courtyard (the cheapest) to those facing the harbor with great views. In between are those that overlook surrounding Tsim Sha Tsui, some of which face Nathan Road and even provide sideways glimpses of the harbor. Still, located between The Peninsula and InterContinental, it plays second fiddle to both in terms of reputation, class — and, luckily, price.

20 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/325-3535** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2369 1111. Fax 852/2739 8707. www.sheraton.com/hongkong. 780 units. HK$2,300–HK$2,700 (US$299–US$351) single, HK$2,500–HK$2,900 (US$325–US$377) double; Tower executive-floor rooms HK$3,000–HK$3,400 (US$390–US$442) single, HK$3,300–HK$3,700 (US$429–US$480) double; from HK$3,500 (US$454) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants (American, oysters/seafood, Japanese, Cantonese, international); bar; 2 lounges; outdoor heated rooftop swimming pool and Jacuzzi; health club; spa; concierge; tour desk; limousine service; business center; shopping arcade; salon; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; executive-level rooms; house doctor. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe.

CENTRAL DISTRICT

Conrad International Hong Kong ★★★ The 61-story Conrad, built in 1990, is one of a trio of exclusive hotels perched on a hillside above Pacific Place, an upscale shopping center located about halfway between the Central District and Wan Chai. One of the conveniences of staying here is that Pacific Place abounds in very good restaurants, greatly expanding dining options without having to venture far. Hong Kong Park is also just steps away. The Conrad's facilities appeal to both businesspeople (who make up 70% of the hotel's clientele, the majority of whom are American or European) and well-heeled leisure travelers. Although the architecture is contemporary, the hotel's classic furnishings and interior design soften the modern effect, giving it a cozy atmosphere with wood paneling, polished granite, and comfortable furniture. I especially like the lighthearted touch of the larger-than-life butterflies and wildflowers on the murals of the massive lobby pillars. Large-size rooms feature windows that extend the width of the room, offering views of either The Peak or the harbor (harbor-view rooms, of course, are better and cost more, though some so-called "city view" rooms offer a partial harbor view through buildings), and spacious bathrooms with separate shower and bathtub facilities. On a playful note, the bathrooms even feature a floating duck or other toy for a bit of fun in

the bathroom, while a stuffed bear is placed on beds at turndown. In short, a great choice for business or pleasure.

Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/445-8667** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2521 3838. Fax 852/2521 3888. www.conrad.com.hk. 513 units. HK$2,850–HK$3,350 (US$370–US$435) single or double; HK$3,550–HK$3,850 (US$461–US$500) executive-floor double; from HK$5,700 (US$740) suite. Children under 18 stay free in parent's room (maximum 3 persons per room). AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Admiralty. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants (Italian, Cantonese, French, international); bar; lounge; heated outdoor pool; state-of-the art health club; Jacuzzi; sauna; concierge; limousine service; business center; shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; executive-level rooms; house doctor. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, dataport, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, bathroom scale, complimentary welcoming tea, fruit, and bottled water.

JW Marriott Hotel Hong Kong ★★ *Value* The 27-story Marriott, which opened in 1989 as the first of three hotels at Pacific Place, is overshadowed by the more luxurious Conrad and Island Shangri-La (see above and below). Its lobby, while not as grandiose as others in this category, is nonetheless the only one of Pacific Place's hotels to offer views of the harbor from its lounge (though with ongoing land reclamation on the waterfront, taller buildings may soon block that view). Best of all, its harbor-view rooms are the cheapest of the three, making it a good value. Rooms, though small, are all designed with right-angled "saw-toothed" windows to maximize views of the harbor or Peak and are outfitted with colorful, hand-painted bedspreads, large marbled bathrooms with separate tub and shower areas, oversize desks equipped with office supplies, and two queen-size or a king-size bed. On the downside, rooms facing the harbor are subject to the slight din of traffic; since rates are the same, request a room on a high floor.

Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/228-9290** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2810 8366. Fax 852/2845 0737. www.marriott.com. 602 units. HK$2,600–HK$2,800 (US$338–US$364) single or double; HK$3,100–HK$3,300 (US$403–US$429) executive-floor single or double; from HK$6,000 (US$780) suite. A/C, DC, MC, V. MTR: Admiralty. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants (Cantonese, Californian, coffee shop); lounge; outdoor heated pool open year-round; health club (open 24 hr.); Jacuzzi; sauna; steam room; concierge; limousine service; business center (open 24 hr.); shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; massage; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; executive-level rooms; house doctor. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, dataport, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe, bathroom scale, complimentary welcoming tea, fruit, and bottled water.

Island Shangri-La Hong Kong ★★★ *Finds* Hong Kong Island's tallest hotel (measured from sea level) offers the ultimate in

extravagance and luxury, rivaling the grand hotels in Paris or London. It's one of my favorite hotels in the world. More than 700 Viennese chandeliers, lush Tai Ping carpets, artistic flower arrangements, and more than 500 paintings and artworks adorn the hotel. The 17-story atrium, which stretches from the 39th to the 56th floors, features a marvelous 16-story-high Chinese painting, drawn by 40 artists from Beijing and believed to be the largest landscape painting in the world. Also in the atrium are a private lounge open only to hotel guests and a two-story old-world–style library. The hotel itself is enhanced by the connecting Pacific Place shopping center, with its many options in dining; across the street is Hong Kong Park. Upon arrival, guests are personally escorted to their rooms (all of which ring the 17-story atrium) by a guest-relations officer, who also explains features of the room. Rooms here, among the largest in Hong Kong and the largest on Hong Kong Island, face either The Peak or spectacular Victoria Harbour and feature marble-topped desks, Chinese lacquerware TV cabinets, and silk bedspreads. Oversize bathrooms are equipped with two sinks and separate tub and shower areas (harbor-view rooms only), bidet, and even jewelry boxes. Fresh flowers and teddy bears placed on pillows during nightly turndown are nice touches. Guests paying rack rates receive such additional services as free transportation from and to the airport, free laundry and dry cleaning throughout their stay, complimentary American or continental breakfast, free local telephone calls, and 6pm late checkout.

Pacific Place, Supreme Court Rd., Central, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/942-5050** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2877 3838. Fax 852/2521 8742. www.shangri-la.com. 565 units. HK$2,500–HK$3,650 (US$325–US$474) single; HK$2,700–HK$3,850 (US$351–US$500) double; from HK$5,800 (US$753) suite. Children under 18 stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Admiralty. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants (French, lobster/seafood, Cantonese, Japanese, buffet); 2 lounges; outdoor heated pool big enough for swimming laps; health club (open 24 hr.); spa; Jacuzzi; sauna; steam bath; concierge; tour desk; limousine service; business center (open 24 hr.); adjoining shopping arcade; salon; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; executive-level rooms; medical clinic; free shuttle to Queen's Pier in Central and Convention Centre. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, fax, dataport, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, bathroom scale, complimentary welcoming tea and fruit.

3 Moderate

Since tour groups have long been a mainstay of tourism in Hong Kong, you're most likely to encounter them at the moderately (and inexpensively) priced hotels, which account for the majority of

hotels in Hong Kong. As for rooms, they tend to be rather small compared to American hotel rooms, with generally unexciting views, but usually have such amenities as hair dryers, minibars or empty refrigerators you can stock yourself, and instant coffee, as well as room service, bellhops, no-smoking floors, tour desks, and sometimes a swimming pool and/or fitness room. Since harbor views are usually not available, rates are generally based on height/floor number and decor and sometimes on size.

KOWLOON

BP International House ★ *Kids* The word "House" in this accommodation's name is misleading, since it is actually a 25-story modern hotel, with a spacious but utilitarian lobby and catering mainly to tour groups, school excursions, and budget-conscious business travelers, which gives it a dormitory-like atmosphere. Built in 1993 at the north end of Kowloon Park, it's just a stone's throw from the park's indoor and outdoor public swimming pools and a short walk to a playground, making it good for families. The park's many paths also make it popular with joggers. The guest rooms, located on the 14th to 25th floors, are clean, pleasant, and modern. Although located inland, the best and priciest rooms on higher floors offer good views of the harbor (with height limitations in Kowloon now gone, however, due to the relocation of the airport, you can expect that taller buildings will someday eclipse those views). Business travelers usually opt for one of the Corporate Rooms on the top five floors. There are also very simple "Family Rooms" equipped with bunk beds that sleep four for HK$1,340 (US$174).

8 Austin Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/223-5652** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2376 1111. Fax 852/2376 1333. www.bpih.com.hk. 535 units. HK$990–HK$1,450 (US$129–US$188) single; HK$1,100–HK$1,500 (US$143–US$195) double; HK$1,600–HK$1,800 (US$208–US$234) Corporate double room; from HK$3,100 (US$403) suite. Children under 13 stay free in parent's room. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Jordan. **Amenities:** Coffee shop; lounge; room service 6:30am–10pm; babysitting; coin-op laundry; laundry/dry-cleaning service; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies.

Eaton Hotel ★★ *Finds* This accommodation has more class and more facilities than most other hotels in this group, making it one of my top picks. A handsome, brick, 21-story hotel, located above a shopping complex not far from the Temple Street Night Market, it features one of the longest hotel escalators I've ever seen — it takes guests straight up to the fourth-floor lobby, where a cheerful and efficient staff awaits your arrival. The lobby lounge is bright and

cheerful, with a four-story glass-enclosed atrium that overlooks a garden terrace with a water cascade, where you can sit outside with drinks in nice weather. Other pluses are the small but nicely done rooftop pool with sunning terrace and the ice makers on every floor (which means you don't have to call room service and which are somewhat of a rarity in Hong Kong). Guest rooms are small but welcoming, with all the basic creature comforts. I especially like the innovatively designed (and highest-priced) deluxe rooms, with curved floor-to-ceiling windows giving views of a distant harbor.

380 Nathan Rd., Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/207-6900** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2782 1818. Fax 852/2782 5563. www.eaton-hotel.com. 460 units. HK$1,430–HK$2,130 (US$97–US$338) single or double; HK$2,430–HK$2,730 (US$316–US$355) executive room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Jordan. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants (Cantonese, Asian/Western, coffee shop); bar; lounge; small outdoor pool; exercise room; concierge; business center; shopping arcade; room service 7am–1am; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe.

Kowloon Hotel ★★ If you like high-tech hotels but don't want to pay a fortune, this is the place for you. The Kowloon is a modern glass-walled structure right behind The Peninsula; they are both under the same management. Its location is great, just a few minutes' walk from the Star Ferry. I also like the fact that the lobby has a computerized street directory for consulates, points of interest, and other addresses, with a printout in both English and Chinese to instruct taxi drivers. The hotel also has a very good pizzeria. But the hotel's main selling point is that it has long offered the most technically advanced rooms in its price category (it even offered them long before upper-priced hotels jumped on the Internet bandwagon). Every room boasts an interactive telecenter (a multisystem TV linked to a central computer), which allows access to such information as up-to-the-minute flight details, incoming messages, and hotel bills; it also contains video games and provides access to the Internet. The telecenter, with word-processing capability, also interfaces with in-room fax machines that double as printers; each has its own private number and even its own personalized e-mail address. Finally, guests can also retrieve voice-mail messages electronically from outside the hotel, and best of all, Internet access is free. The downside: rooms are minuscule and are plagued by traffic noise. Although they have V-shaped bay windows, allowing unobstructed views up and down the street, The Peninsula's new tower has robbed harbor views from all but the most expensive rooms.

19–21 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/262-9467** in the U.S., or 852/2929 2888. Fax 852/2739 9811. www.peninsula.com. 736 units. HK$1,300–HK$2,550 (US$169–US$331) single; HK$1,400–HK$2,650 (US$182–US$344) double; from HK$3,700 (US$480) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants (Italian, Cantonese, international buffet); bar; access to nearby YMCA pool and a nearby health club (fee charged); limousine service; business center; shopping arcade; room service 6:30am–2am; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/access to Internet, fax, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe.

Park Hotel Built in 1961 on what was once a waterfront but now is far inland, the Park Hotel has long been one of the best-known medium-priced hotels in Kowloon. It's a clean and comfortable establishment — you can't go wrong staying here. Especially popular with Australians and mainland Chinese, this hotel probably has the largest rooms in the moderate category, a plus if you're tired of cramped quarters. The best rooms, with spacious bathrooms, are on the upper floors of the 16-floor property; the lower floors can be noisy, especially those facing the street. The location, on the border between Tsim Sha Tsui and Tsim Sha Tsui East, across from the Science Museum and Museum of History, is not as convenient as that of many other hotels in this category, though it is within walking distance of the MTR (about 6 min.) and hover-ferry service to Central (about 8 min.).

61–65 Chatham Rd. S., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **852/2366 1371.** Fax 852/2739 7259. www.parkhotel.com.hk. 423 units. HK$900–HK$1,300 (US$117–US$169) single; HK$1,000–HK$1,400 (US$130–US$182) twin; from HK$2,000 (US$260) suite. 1 child under 12 can stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants (Cantonese, international buffet, coffee shop); bar; tour desk; limousine service; shopping arcade; salon; room service 6:30am–midnight; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; doctor on call. *In room:* A/C, cable TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker (coffee supplied only in deluxe rooms), hair dryer, safe.

Pruton Prudential Hotel *Kids* This 1991 hotel, at the northern end of Tsim Sha Tsui, towers 17 stories above a six-level shopping complex and the MTR Jordan station, providing easy and direct access to the rest of Hong Kong. About a 20-minute walk from the Star Ferry and only minutes from the Temple Street Night Market, Jade Market, and a Tin Hau temple, it offers smartly decorated rooms, with sleek furniture, artwork, and Japanese moving panels framing the windows. The rates are based on the view and height, with the cheapest rooms on lower floors. If possible, avoid those facing the back and nondescript buildings. Deluxe rooms feature floor-to-ceiling bay windows, some with a partial glimpse of the

harbor in the distance. Although the hotel itself has only a coffee shop and a bar, there are several other restaurants within the shopping complex. Another plus is the 18m-long (60 ft.) rooftop pool. Families take note: Unlike most hotels, there's no charge for one extra bed for children under 12 years old.

222 Nathan Rd. (entrance on Tak Shing St.), Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **852/2311 8222.** Fax 852/2311 4760. www.prutonhotel.com. 431 units. HK$1,000–HK$1,700 (US$130–US$221) single or double; HK$2,000 (US$260) Executive Club floor; from HK$2,700 (US$351) suite. 1 child under 12 stays free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Jordan. **Amenities:** Restaurant (coffee shop); bar; outdoor pool; exercise room; tour desk; limousine service; business center (open 24 hr.); shopping arcade; salon; room service 6am–midnight; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service. *In room:* A/C, TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe.

Regal Kowloon Hotel ★ *Value* The 15-story Regal Kowloon offers more services and is more attractive than most hotels in its price range, with a lobby that blends East and West with reproduction 18th-century French antiques and Louis XV–style furniture standing alongside Chinese works of art. Recent renovations have brought an unfortunate choice in hallway carpeting, and the guest rooms, all soundproof, are rather middle of the road but perfectly adequate, with the exception of good bedside reading lights. The cheapest rooms face another building, provide no view whatsoever, and tend to be dark. The more expensive rooms face a garden; some even have a glimpse of the harbor between buildings. Business travelers may opt for Regal Class rooms, while Regal Club executive floors go a step further with added services and amenities. The most moderately priced of several hotels in Tsim Sha Tsui East, it's about a 6-minute walk to the nearest subway station but only a minute's walk to the hover-ferry service to Central.

71 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/222-8888** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2722 1818. Fax 852/2369 6950. www.regalkowloon.com. 592 units. HK$1,100–HK$1,800 (US$143–US$234) single or double; from HK$2,000 (US$260) Regal Class; from HK$2,500 (US$325) Regal Club; from HK$4,000 (US$519) suite. 2 children under 12 can stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants (American, Cantonese, coffee shop); bar; lounge; exercise room; tour desk; limousine service; business center; shopping arcade; salon; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; executive-level rooms; house doctor. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, minibar, hair dryer.

MID-LEVELS

Bishop Lei International House ★★ *Finds* If you want to pretend that you live in Hong Kong, in a residential area popular with

ex-pats and abounding in charming neighborhood restaurants and bars, this is the place for you. Located in the Mid-Levels, about halfway up Victoria Peak, at the top of the Central/Mid-Levels Escalator that delivers residents to jobs in Central in the morning and then reverses to bring them back home again later in the day, it is not as convenient as other hotels, but it has its certain charm. In addition, the hotel makes up for its out-of-the-way location with free shuttle service to Central; a half-dozen city buses also stop outside its door. Opened in 1996 and managed by the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, it offers tiny standard rooms (with even tinier bathrooms, most equipped with showers instead of tubs) that have large windows letting in lots of sunshine. Unfortunately, these face inland. If you can, spring for a more expensive room facing the harbor. Since they're so high up, views are fantastic. Harbor-view rooms also have the advantage of a video player (video-rental shops are located nearby), appealing to the hotel's many long-staying business travelers (long-term packages available). In any case, in acknowledgement that rooms are small, there's a reading room for relaxation, and surprising for a hotel this size, also a small pool and exercise room. If the frenetic pace of Hong Kong sets you on edge, you'll find this a nice retreat.

4 Robinson Rd., Mid-Levels, Hong Kong. ✆ **852/2868 0828.** Fax 852/2862 1551. www.bishopleihtl.com.hk. 203 units. HK$1,080 (US$140) single; HK$1,280–HK$1,680 (US$166–US$218) double; from HK$1,880 (US$244) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Bus: 3B, 12, 12M, 23, 23A, and 40 to Robinson Rd. **Amenities:** Coffee shop; small outdoor pool; small exercise room; business center; 24-hr. room service; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; free shuttle bus to Central. *In room:* A/C, cable TV, dataport, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe.

CAUSEWAY BAY & WAN CHAI

Best Western Rosedale on the Park ★★★ *Finds* This hotel has lots going for it, not least of which is that it opened in 2001, giving it a more contemporary, high-tech edge over older properties in the area. Targeting corporate accounts, it sweetens the deal with several innovative incentives, including complimentary broadband Internet service in each room, cordless phones, in-house mobile phones that allow you to receive calls if you're out of your room, free drinks in the fridge, and a lounge with computers and Internet access guests can use for free. Only 13 rooms on each floor give it a boutique-hotel-like atmosphere. Rooms are small but have everything you need, though note that the least expensive "superior" rooms are on lower floors and face another building. Some rooms on the 31st-floor executive level have side views of the harbor (you

have to be standing at the window to see it), but the real benefits here are the microwaves and kitchen utensils, making it a good bet for long-staying guests.

8 Shelter St., Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/528-1234** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2127 8888. Fax 852/2127 3333. www.rosedale.com.hk. 274 units. HK$1,180–HK$1,280 (US$153–US$166) single; HK$1,280–HK$1,380 (US$166–US$179) double; HK$1,580 (US$205) executive double; from HK$1,980 (US$257) suite. Children under 18 can stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Causeway Bay. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants (Cantonese, international/fusion); lounge; small fitness room; business center; room service 6:30am–midnight; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service. *In room:* A/C, cable TV w/pay movies, dataport, fridge, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe, complimentary soda, beer, and bottled water.

Empire Hotel ★ *Value* Nicely situated in the heart of Wan Chai and popular with midlevel business travelers for its convenience to Central, this business hotel offers good value, with many of the same amenities, services, and facilities found at higher-priced hotels, including a rooftop outdoor swimming pool large enough for swimming laps, a highly recommended Shanghainese restaurant called Wu Kong, and free shuttle service to Hong Kong Station in Central. Narrow hallways may provide a challenge to the claustrophobic, while rooms, with rates based on size (none provide a view of the harbor), are also small but comfortable and pleasant, each equipped with a Data View Information System, which allows guests to receive messages on their television sets, check flight schedules, check information (on stocks, finance, or shopping), play video games, and view the hotel services directory (but it does not provide Internet access). The top five floors, comprised of Empire Plus rooms, are geared toward business travelers with such extras as wall-mounted TVs (leaving more desk space), fax machines, and a magnetic whiteboard.

33 Hennessy Rd., Wan Chai, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/830-6144** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2866 9111. Fax 852/2861 3121. www.asiastandard.com. 345 units. HK$1,400–HK$1,800 (US$182–US$234) single or double; HK$2,000 (US$260) Empire Plus room; from HK$2,200 (US$264) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Wan Chai. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants (Shanghainese, steak, coffee shop); lounge; outdoor pool; exercise room; sauna; concierge; tour desk; limousine service; business center; room service 7am–11pm; massage; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, dataport, minibar, coffeemaker, safe.

Excelsior ★ Located on the waterfront near a lively shopping area, the Excelsior, built in 1973, belongs to the Mandarin Oriental group of hotels but is relatively moderately priced. However, because up to 20% of the people staying here belong to tour groups, the lobby is often overcrowded and buzzing with activity, sometimes

making it difficult to get front-desk service or find an empty seat. The elevators are also crowded. On the plus side, this is a good place to stay if you like to jog, since it's close to 50-acre Victoria Park, Hong Kong's largest city park. In addition, the hotel offers free guided tours to the nearby Noon Day Gun, which fires every day at . . .well . . . noon, and its top-floor TOTT'S Asian Grill & Bar offers spectacular harbor views, outrageous decor, and great East-meets-West cuisine. Most rooms are the same small size with the same decor and tend to be crowded. Those that command a view of the harbor with the Hong Kong Yacht Club and Kowloon on the other side are the most expensive and the largest; slightly cheaper are those with side harbor views or views of the park, while the cheapest face inland toward the city.

281 Gloucester Rd., Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/526-6566** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2894 8888. Fax 852/2895 6459. www.mandarinoriental.com/excelsior. 865 units. HK$1,900–HK$2,500 (US$247–US$325) single or double; HK$2,300–HK$2,900 (US$299–US$377) Executive Floor; from HK$3,800 (US$494) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Causeway Bay. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants (Pacific Rim fusion, Cantonese, Italian, international buffet); bar; lounge; 2 indoor tennis courts; exercise room; sauna; steam room; concierge; tour desk; business center; salon; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, dataport, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron/ironing board, safe.

Harbour View International House *Value* Opened in 1986, this YMCA occupies a prime spot on the Wan Chai waterfront, right next to the Hong Kong Arts Centre and not far from the convention center. Rooms, all twin or double beds, are rather stylish for a YMCA, attracting guests mostly from mainland China and North America. Best of all, more than half the rooms face the harbor with V-shaped windows, making this the cheapest place on Hong Kong Island with great views. Rooms that face inland are even cheaper.

4 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai, Hong Kong. ✆ **852/2802 0111.** Fax 852/2802 9063. www.harbour.ymca.org.hk. 320 units. HK$1,200–HK$1,750 (US$156–US$228) single or double. Children under 12 stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Wan Chai. **Amenities:** Restaurant (Chinese/Western); lounge; tour desk; room service 10:30am–10pm; babysitting; laundry/dry-cleaning service. *In room:* A/C, cable TV, minibar.

Luk Kwok Hotel The Luk Kwok was originally built in the 1930s on what was then the waterfront; seven stories high, at the time, it was the tallest building in Wan Chai. It achieved its greatest fame, however, for its role in Richard Mason's fictional *The World of Suzie Wong,* when Wan Chai was the domain of prostitutes and sailors. How things have changed since then! After a complete

demolition, the Luk Kwok reopened in 1990 as a totally new and remodeled larger hotel, slightly antiseptic, and appealing mainly to business travelers, probably because of its lack of facilities. Now located some 2 blocks inland due to land reclamation, not far from the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, the new hotel is high-tech and modern, with a granite-and-marble lobby and updated rooms. The hotel's two restaurants are on the first floor, while the next 17 floors are used for a parking garage and offices. Guest rooms, located on the 19th to 29th floors, are a cut above those in other area business hotels, larger in size and equipped with all the necessities, including large counter space in the bathroom. The addition of plants in every bathroom is a nice touch, and some rooms even have a glimpse of the harbor between buildings. I also like the small cocktail lounge open only to hotel guests.

72 Gloucester Rd., Wan Chai, Hong Kong. ✆ **852/2866 2166.** Fax 852/2866 2622. www.lukkwokhotel.com. 196 units. HK$1,500–HK$1,800 (US$195–US$234) single; HK$1,650–HK$1,950 (US$214–US$253) double; HK$2,300–HK$2,400 (US$299–US$312) executive-floor double; from HK$3,600 (US$468) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Wan Chai. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants (Cantonese, international); lounge; exercise room; concierge; tour desk; limousine service; business center; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; executive-level rooms. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, dataport, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe.

AT THE AIRPORT

Regal Airport Hotel ★ *Kids* Opened in autumn 1998 as Hong Kong's largest hotel and the only hotel at Hong Kong International Airport, this Regal chain hotel is only a 5-minute walk from the airport via covered walkway and is convenient for those with early-morning flights (in 2002, the Regal was offering a "Last Night in Hong Kong Package" with greatly reduced rates for those who stayed elsewhere in Hong Kong but wanted their last night to be close to the airport; inquire whether the package has been carried to 2003). Standout facilities include a 24-hour cafe offering Asian and Western fare (unique for its rotating art gallery, which moves through the restaurant on tracks) and a very good children's recreation room with games ranging from slides, toys, and books for youngsters to air hockey, pool, and electronic games for teenagers. Otherwise, because central Hong Kong is only a 20-minute train ride away, I think you're much better off staying in town, near the shops, restaurants, sights, and street-life vitality that make Hong Kong unique. In addition, even though the hotel makes a conscious effort to brighten its interior with lots of mirrors and glass, including a glass dome over the

lobby and gleaming black floors that reflect light, it can't seem to escape its airport connection, and the futuristic decor (including a flying-saucer–shaped stage for live music in the lobby), reminds me of a spaceship. Guest rooms are quite large and soundproof, with modern furniture in eye-popping colors of purple, red, or lime green; all but the cheapest also have TVs with keyboards for Internet access and electronic games. Business travelers may opt for Regal Class rooms, while Regal Club executive floors go a step further with added services and amenities.

9 Cheong Tat Rd., Chek Lap Kok, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/222-8888** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2286 8888. Fax 852/2286 8686. www.regalhotel.com. 1,100 units. HK$1,700–HK$2,400 (US$221–US$312) single; HK$1,850–HK$2,550 (US$240–US$331) double; HK$2,900 (US$377) Regal Class double; HK$3,200 (US$416) Regal Club double; from HK$4,500 (US$584) suite. Children under 12 stay free in parent's room (maximum 2 children per room). AE, DC, MC, V. Airport Express Liner: Hong Kong International Airport. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants (Cantonese, Shanghainese, Japanese, international, steaks); lounge; indoor and outdoor pools; health club and spa; children's recreation room; concierge; limousine service; business center (open 24 hr.); shopping arcade; salon; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning service; executive-level rooms; house doctor. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/keyboard for Internet connection, games, and pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe.

4 Inexpensive

Unfortunately, Hong Kong has more expensive hotels than it does budget accommodations. Hotels in this category generally offer small, functional rooms with a bathroom and air-conditioning but usually have few services or facilities. Some budget accommodations also offer rooms without private bathroom at cheaper prices (if no mention is made here of rooms without bathroom, you can assume all rooms have bathrooms). Always inquire whether there's a difference in price between rooms with twin beds and those with double beds. If possible, try to *see* a room before committing yourself, since some may be better than others in terms of traffic noise, view, condition, and size. For the most part, however, you shouldn't have any problems with the inexpensive hotels recommended here.

KOWLOON

Booth Lodge ★★ *Finds* About a 30-minute walk to the Star Ferry, but close to the Jade Market, Temple Street Night Market, and Ladies' Market, and only a 2-minute walk from the MTR station, Booth Lodge is located just off Nathan Road on the seventh floor of the Salvation Army building. Recently renovated, it has a comfortable lobby and an adjacent coffee shop offering very

reasonably priced dinner buffets with Chinese, Japanese, and Western selections. Best is the restaurant's outdoor brick terrace overlooking a wooded hillside, where buffet barbecues are held on weekend evenings. Rooms, all twins or doubles and either standard rooms or larger deluxe rooms, are spotlessly clean. Some that face toward Nathan Road have views of a harbor in the distance, though those facing the hillside are quieter. If you're looking for inexpensive yet reliable lodging in a convenient location, this is a good bet. A bonus: Local telephone calls are free.

11 Wing Sing Lane, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **852/2771 9266.** Fax 852/2385 1140. www.boothlodge.netfirms.com. 53 units. HK$620–HK$1,500 (US$81–US$195) single or double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, MC, V. MTR: Yau Ma Tei. **Amenities:** Coffee shop (international); tour desk; laundry/dry-cleaning service. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer.

Caritas Bianchi Lodge *Value* Just down the street from Booth Lodge and also convenient to the jade and night markets and MTR station, this accommodation is not as homey as Booth Lodge and has as much personality as a college dormitory. However, throughout 2002, it was charging only half the rack rates given below; if it holds to the 50% rate cut through 2003, it's a bargain that can't be beat. Most of its very simple rooms, with large desks and closets, face toward the back of the hotel, offering a view of a wooded cliff and a small park, certainly a nicer vista than most hotels can boast. Try to get a room on a higher floor. This establishment, under management of the Roman Catholic Church's social welfare bureau and popular with long-staying guests for its monthly rates, is a good choice for single travelers, including women.

4 Cliff Rd., Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **852/2388 1111.** Fax 852/2770 6669. cblresv@bianchi-lodge.com. 90 units. HK$720 (US$94) single; HK$820–HK$1,200 (US$107–US$156) double. Rates include buffet breakfast. Monthly rates available. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Yau Ma Tei. **Amenities:** Restaurant (Western/Chinese); tour desk; room service 7am–9pm; laundry/dry-cleaning service. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV, minibar.

Grand Tower ★ Part of the Grand Plaza shopping center, the Grand Tower is in Mong Kok at the northern end of Nathan Road, just a couple minutes' walk away from the Ladies' Market. It caters to a largely Asian clientele, split evenly between business and leisure travelers. Its bright, sixth-floor marble lobby lies beneath a skylight, in sharp contrast to the chaos and jumble of the streets below. Its rooms are quite large and pleasant; the most expensive rooms are on upper floors and offer views of the city. Otherwise, rooms face either an inner courtyard or Nathan Road; while Nathan Road is noisier, it's

also more entertaining — you could spend hours just staring out your window at its bustle. Although it's a bit far from the tip of Tsim Sha Tsui, the hotel is close to both a subway station and bus stops and offers free, hourly shuttle service to Tsim Sha Tsui. In short, this hotel, while far from deluxe, is a good solid choice in inexpensive lodging.

627–641 Nathan Rd., Mong Kok, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **852/2789 0011.** Fax 852/2789 0945. www.grandhotel.com.hk. 549 units. HK$750–HK$1,700 (US$97–US$221) single or double; from HK$2,400 (US$312) suite. 1 child under 12 can stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Mong Kok. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants (Cantonese, Chiu Chow, coffee shop); lounge; tour desk; limousine service; business center; shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; same-day laundry/drying cleaning service; doctor on call. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer.

Majestic Hotel ★★ *Value* This modern brick hotel, located in the colorful Yau Ma Tei district with its main entrance on Saigon Street, is just a few minutes' walk from the subway station and the Temple Street Night Market. Built in 1992, it rises above the Majestic Centre complex, which includes a shopping arcade, food court, game arcade, and two small cinemas. The hotel offers good-size rooms, with a desk, sitting area, and large windows (but unfortunately no exciting views). The cheapest rooms occupy the lower floors and face another building, while the most expensive rooms are on higher floors, have city views, and have coffeemakers and dataports. Unlike most hotels in Hong Kong, the Majestic offers ice machines on every floor, saving a call to room service, and offers more facilities and services than most in its price category.

348 Nathan Rd., Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/44-UTELL** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2781 1333. Fax 852/2781 1773. www.majestichotel.com.hk. 387 units. HK$950–HK$1,850 (US$123–US$240) single or double; from HK$3,000 (US$390) suite. 1 child under 12 can stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Jordan. **Amenities:** Restaurant (international buffet); bar; tour desk; business center; shopping arcade; 24-hr. room service; babysitting; same-day laundry/dry-cleaning, doctor on call. *In room:* A/C, satellite TV w/pay movies, minibar, hair dryer, safe.

The Salisbury YMCA ★★★ *Kids* For decades, the overwhelming number-one choice among low-cost accommodations has been the YMCA on Salisbury Road, which has the good fortune of being right next to The Peninsula hotel on the waterfront, just a 2-minute walk from both the Star Ferry and subway station. Welcoming families as well as individual men and women, it has 19 single rooms (none with harbor view) and more than 280 twins (the most expensive twins provide great harbor views), as well as suites with and without harbor views that are great for families. Although simple in

decor, these rooms are on a par with those at more expensively priced hotels in terms of in-room amenities.

For budget travelers, there are 14 dormitory-style rooms, each with two bunk beds, individual reading lights, private bathroom, and lockers, available only to visitors who have been in Hong Kong fewer than 10 days. Great for families is its sports facility boasting two indoor swimming pools (one a lap pool, the other a children's pool, both free for all hotel guests except those in dormitory) and a fitness gym, two squash courts, and indoor climbing wall (fees charged). There's also a fourth-floor terrace with play equipment for children. Needless to say, the Salisbury is so popular that you should make reservations in advance, especially if booking for April or October. Although expensive for a YMCA, the location and facilities are worth the price; here you have Tsim Sha Tsui's cheapest rooms with harbor views. Highly recommended.

Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/537-8483** in the U.S. and Canada, or 852/2268 7000 (852/2268 7888 for reservations). Fax 852/2739 9315. www.ymcahk.org.hk. 363 units. HK$710 (US$92) single; HK$790–HK$990 (US$103–US$129) double; from HK$1,300 (US$169) suite. Dormitory bed HK$210 (US$27). AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants (international buffet, international cafeteria); 2 indoor pools; exercise room; Jacuzzi; sauna; squash courts; climbing wall; tour desk; room service 7am–10pm; massage; babysitting; coin-op laundry; laundry/dry-cleaning service. *In room:* A/C, satellite/cable TV w/complimentary in-house movies, dataport, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe.

Stanford Hillview Hotel ★ *Finds* This small, intimate hotel, built in 1991, is near the heart of Tsim Sha Tsui, and yet it's a world away from it, located on top of a hill in the shade of some huge banyan trees, next to the Royal Observatory with its colonial building and greenery. Knutsford Terrace, an alley with trendy bars and restaurants, is just a couple of minutes' walk away. Its lobby is quiet and subdued (quite a contrast to most Hong Kong hotels) and its staff is friendly and accommodating. The most expensive rooms are on higher floors; ask for one that faces the Observatory. In addition to the regular "economy" rooms on the third and fourth floors (the cheapest rates below), there are two unlisted rooms that are smaller and are located on the second floor facing the back of the hotel; costing HK$500 (US$65), these should be booked well in advance. All in all, a very civilized place, but it is a hike uphill to the hotel.

13–17 Observatory Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. ✆ **800/858-8471** in the U.S., or 852/2722 7822. Fax 852/2723 3718. www.stanfordhillview.com. 163 units. HK$880–HK$1,580 (US$114–US$205) single or double. AE, DC, MC, V. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui. **Amenities:** Restaurant (international buffet); lounge; outdoor golf-driving nets; small exercise room; business center; 24-hr. room service; babysitting;

same-day laundry/dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, cable TV w/pay movies, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer.

5 Rock-Bottom Accommodations (Guesthouses & Youth Hostels)

GUESTHOUSES

Hong Kong's cheapest accommodations aren't hotels and aren't recommended for visitors who expect cleanliness and comfort. Rather, these accommodations, usually called "guesthouses," attract a young backpacking crowd, many of whom are traveling through Asia and are interested only in a bed at the lowest price. They also attract laborers, mostly men from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. At any rate, some guesthouses offer rooms with a private bathroom; others are nothing more than rooms filled with bunk beds. Of Hong Kong's rock-bottom establishments, none is more notorious than **Chungking Mansion.** Although it occupies a prime spot at 40 Nathan Road, between the Holiday Inn Golden Mile and the Sheraton in Tsim Sha Tsui, Chungking Mansion is easy to overlook; there's no big sign heralding its existence. In fact, its ground floor is one huge maze of inexpensive shops.

But above all those shops are five towering concrete blocks, each served by its own tiny elevator and known collectively as Chungking Mansion. Inside are hundreds of little businesses, apartments, guesthouses, eateries, and sweatshops. Some of the guesthouses are passable; many are not.

Chungking is not the kind of place you'd want to recommend to anyone uninitiated in the seamier side of travel. The views from many room windows are more insightful than some guests might like — the backside of the building and mountains of trash down below. Even worse are the ancient-looking elevators filled to capacity with human cargo; you might want to stick to the stairs. In any case, sometimes the elevators don't work at all, making it a long hike up the dozen flights of stairs to the top floors. But the most compelling argument for avoiding Chungking Mansion is one of safety — it could be a towering inferno waiting to happen. However, for some budget travelers, it's a viable alternative to Hong Kong's high-priced hotels. And you certainly can't beat it for location.

If you insist on staying here, these are my recommendations. Chungking Mansion is divided into five separate blocks, from A Block to E Block. For the less daring, A Block is the best, since its elevator is closest to the front entrance of the building. The other

elevators are farther back in the shopping arcade, which can be a little disconcerting at night when the shops are all closed and the corridors are deserted. I recommend that you begin your search in Block A. I also recommend that you stay on lower floors. If guesthouses here are full or you want to save money, check the guesthouses toward the back of the building in the other blocks. But no matter what the block, never leave any valuables in your room.

YOUTH HOSTELS

There are seven youth hostels in Hong Kong, including its islands and territories, and they offer the cheapest rates around. However, most are not conveniently located — indeed, some require a ferry ride and/or a 45-minute hike from the nearest bus stop, as they are located in country parks.

If you don't have a youth hostel card, you can still stay at a youth hostel by paying an extra HK$35 (US$4.55) per night. After 6 nights, nonmembers are eligible for member status and subsequently pay overnight charges at members' rates.

The most conveniently located youth hostel is the 169-bed **Jockey Club Mt. Davis Youth Hostel (Mau Wui Hall),** on the top of Mount Davis on Hong Kong Island (✆ **852/2817 5715**). It charges HK$65 (US$8.45) per night for a dormitory bed for those aged 18 and over. There are also a few private rooms, with a double costing HK$150 (US$19) and a triple costing HK$225 (US$29). Facilities include a communal kitchen and coin-op laundry room. To reach it, take the Ma Mui Hall Shuttle Bus, which departs from the Macau Ferry Terminal (MTR: Sheung Wan) daily at 9:30am and 7, 9, and 10:30pm.

Alternatively, take bus no. 47A from Admiralty or minibus no. 54 from the outlying islands ferry terminal in Central, getting off near the junction of Victoria Road and Mt. Davis Path. Backtrack a few minutes from the bus stop and hike up Mt. Davis Path 35 minutes to the hostel (do not confuse Mt. Davis Path with Mt. Davis Rd.). A taxi from Central costs approximately HK$60 to HK$70 (US$7.80–US$9.10). The hostel itself is open daily from 7am to 11pm.

There are six other youth hostels on some of the outlying islands and in the New Territories; most charge HK$45 (US$5.85) for those 18 and older. Check-in is from 4pm. There are kitchens and washing facilities, as well as campsites. Since these hostels are not easily accessible, they are recommended only for the adventurous traveler. Of these, the **S.G. Davis Hostel,** on Lantau island near the Po Lin Monastery with its giant Buddha (✆ **852/2985 5610**), is the

easiest to reach from the airport. For more information on Hong Kong's youth hostels, contact the **Hong Kong Youth Hostels Association,** Room 225–226, Block 19, Shek Kip Mei Estate, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon (✆ **852/2788 1638;** www.yha.org.hk/). The Hong Kong Tourist Association also has a flyer on youth hostels.

4

Where to Dine

Dining is one of *the* things to do in Hong Kong (the city has more than 10,000 restaurants!). Not only is the food excellent, but the range of culinary possibilities is nothing short of staggering. Hong Kong also has what may well be the greatest concentration of Chinese restaurants in the world. In a few short days, you can take a culinary tour of virtually every major region of China, dining on Cantonese, Szechuan, Shanghainese, Pekingese, Chiu Chow, and other Chinese specialties. Some restaurants are huge, bustling, family affairs, countless others are mere holes in the wall, and a few of the trendiest are Shanghai chic, remakes of 1930s salons and opium dens.

But dining in the SAR is by no means limited to Chinese restaurants. Although various national cuisines have long been popular, particularly French, Italian, Thai, and Indian, ethnic restaurants have literally exploded onto the culinary scene in the past few years, offering even greater diversity, from tapas and tacos to sushi. Japanese food is especially the rage among locals, and you'll find Japanese offerings on virtually every international buffet spread in Hong Kong, along with sushi delivered via conveyor belts in an ever-growing number of sushi bars.

By far, Hong Kong's most well known, exclusive restaurants, both Chinese and Western, have long been located in the hotels. That's not surprising when you realize that first-class hotels are accustomed to catering to well-traveled visitors who demand high quality in service, cuisine, and decor.

In a welcome trend, however, enterprising, ambitious, and talented chefs have been opening neighborhood establishments in ever-greater numbers, often in modest but imaginative surroundings. These include ethnic restaurants, as well as eateries offering innovative dishes, with limited but intriguing menus.

The restaurants listed below are grouped first according to location (the most popular areas are Kowloon, the Central District, and Causeway Bay/Wan Chai) and then according to price. Those in the **Very Expensive** category ($$$$) will cost more than HK$650

(US$85) for dinner without drinks (some restaurants average HK$1,000/US$130 or more per person). In the **Expensive** category ($$$), dinners average HK$400 to HK$650 (US$52–US$85). **Moderate** restaurants ($$) serve meals ranging from HK$200 to HK$399 (US$26–US$52), while **Inexpensive** restaurants ($) offer meals for less than HK$200 (US$26). Keep in mind, however, that these guidelines are approximations only.

I should add that Chinese restaurants often have very long menus, sometimes listing more than 100 dishes. In specifying price ranges for "main courses" under each Chinese establishment below, therefore, I excluded both delicacies and the inexpensive rice and noodle dishes. In most cases, "main courses" refers to meat and vegetable combinations. Remember, since the price range is large, you can eat cheaply even at moderately priced restaurants by choosing wisely. Remember, too, that in Chinese restaurants, it's customary to order one main dish for each diner plus one extra, to share.

As for dress codes, unless otherwise stated, many upper-end restaurants have done away with the jacket-and-tie requirement. Rather, "smart casual" or business casual is nowadays appropriate for most of the fancier places, meaning that men should wear long-sleeved shirts and that jeans and sport shoes are inappropriate.

1 Kowloon

VERY EXPENSIVE

Gaddi's ★★★ FRENCH Opened in 1953 and named after a former general manager of The Peninsula, Gaddi's was long considered the best European restaurant in Hong Kong. Although that reputation has since been challenged by the birth of many other superb restaurants, the service is still excellent, the waiters are professional, and the food is always beyond reproof. Gaddi's is still a legend in Asia, the epitome of old Hong Kong. It's especially popular with an older, well-to-do crowd that prefers traditional French food without the culinary surprises of nouvelle cuisine. There's live, discreet music at night and a small dance floor.

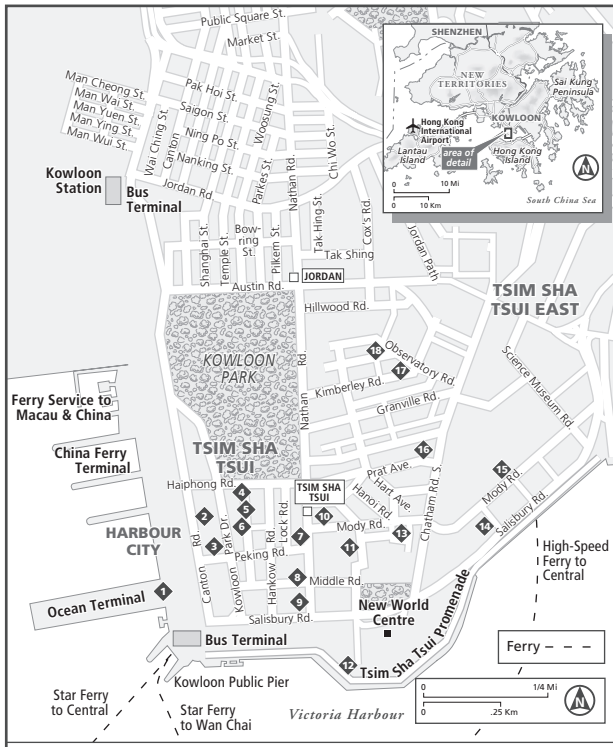
The atmosphere, intended to evoke the hotel's original 1928 neoclassical architecture, is that of an elegant European dining room blended with the best of Asia, with crystal-and-silver chandeliers from Paris, Tai Ping carpet, a Chinese coromandel screen dating from 1670, and Biedermeier-style chairs. As for the food, it's French haute cuisine at its finest, with a menu that changes every 6 months but always includes steak and seafood. Examples of past dishes are

pan-fried scallops and mussels on baby spinach and braised pearl onions in a light saffron-mussel sauce, and lamb rack gratinéed in a black truffle pesto with Parmesan sauce and lamb juice. The wine cellar is among the best and largest in Hong Kong, with a collection of rare vintages — but who could blame you if you get carried away and splurge on champagne?

In The Peninsula hotel, Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2920 2888,** ext. 3171. Reservations recommended at lunch, required at dinner. Jacket/tie required for men at dinner. Main courses HK$330–HK$490 (US$43–US$64); fixed-price lunch HK$340 (US$44); fixed-price dinner HK$650–HK$950 (US$84–US$123). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm and 7–10:30pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Yan Toh Heen (formerly Lai Ching Heen) ★★★ CANTONESE Fears that the transition of the acclaimed Regent Hotel to new ownership as an InterContinental would bring a demise seemed confirmed when the highly respected Lai Ching Heen changed its name. In a smart move, however, InterContinental quickly brought back the original chef of Lai Ching Heen to reestablish its famed footing. Although it's too early to tell whether the ploy will work, in truth, little seems changed beyond the new name, which loosely translates as a "Place to enjoy the beautiful view." It's still a great restaurant, enveloping diners in a sophisticated, hushed environment, with large windows treating diners to a view of famous Victoria Harbour. The decor emphasizes the beauty of stark simplicity, with bonsai trees and flower arrangements that change with the lunar calendar; the restaurant is famous for its beautiful jade table settings. Dishes are traditional Cantonese, as well as imaginative creations that border on Chinese nouvelle cuisine. The menu changes with each lunar month but always includes seafood, the restaurant's signature barbecued suckling pig and Peking duck, seasonal vegetables, and a wide selection of desserts. Examples are stewed lobster and eggplant with hot plum sauce in casserole, deep-fried prawns with sesame and mayonnaise sauce, and roast duck with kiwi in lemon sauce. Since most diners follow the Chinese custom of ordering several dishes and then sharing, the average dinner bill without wine here begins at HK$1,000 (US$130) for two. For lunch, an additional menu is offered that includes main dishes averaging about HK$120 (US$16), as well as dim sum.

In the InterContinental Hong Kong, 18 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2721 1211.** Reservations recommended (request a window seat). Main dishes HK$120–HK$530 (US$16–US$69); fixed-price lunch HK$148 (US$19). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm and 6–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.



Banana Leaf Curry House **10**
The Chinese **7**
Dan Ryan's Chicago Grill **1**
El Cid Spanish Restaurant **18**
Fat Angelo's **4**
Felix **9**
Fook Lam Moon **17**
Gaddi's **9**
Gaylord **6**
Great Shanghai **16**
Happy Garden Noodles & Congee Kitchen **2**
Harbour Side **12**
Jimmy's Kitchen **5**
Koh-I-Noor **11**
Main Street Deli **3**
The Pizzeria **8**
Sabatini **15**
Shang Palace **14**
Spring Deer Restaurant **13**
The Stonegrill **5**
Yü **12**

Yü ★★★ SEAFOOD There's no mistaking what this restaurant serves — it's all right there in front of you, swimming blissfully in part of a 12m (40-ft.) "bubble wall," unaware that their days are

numbered. On the other side of the restaurant spreads a stunning view of Victoria Harbour. Located in the swank InterContinental but trendily low-key, Yü offers a nice concept — fresh seafood for cautious diners reluctant to tempt fate by ordering locally caught fish in Hong Kong's cheaper, noisier, and more colorful seaside restaurants favored by Hong Kong Chinese. Of course, you also pay a mountain more to eat here, but from the looks of things, there are plenty of takers. All the seafood, including a variety of garoupa, trout, other fish, lobsters, crabs, prawns, abalone, mussels, and oysters, are kept alive in tanks until the moment they're ordered and can be prepared in a variety of both Asian and Western ways, including grilled, poached, sautéed or steamed. Many diners, however, stick to the imported oysters or begin their meals with the signature Seafood Mountain — fresh seafood laid on a mountain of ice, including oysters, prawns, mussels, scallops, crab, and lobster, served with six different sauces. Sautéed lobster with black beans and fine noodles is the restaurant's signature dish. There's also sushi, and, surprisingly, vegetarian choices.

In the Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong, Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2721 1211.** Reservations necessary (request a window seat). Main courses HK$230–HK$330 (US$30–US$43); fixed-price lunch HK$195–HK$250 (US$25–US$32); fixed-price dinner HK$650 (US$84). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–3pm; daily 6–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

EXPENSIVE

Felix ★★★ *Value* PACIFIC RIM FUSION/CROSSOVER Located on the top floor of The Peninsula's tower addition, this strikingly avant-garde restaurant comes as something of a shock in the otherwise staid and traditionally conservative hotel. But what else can you expect from a restaurant designed by Philippe Starck? Your first hint that Felix is not your ordinary dining experience begins with the elevator's wavy walls, which suggest a voyage to the world beyond, and continues inside the restaurant with its huge aluminum wall and two glass facades that curve seductively to reveal stunning views of Kowloon and Hong Kong Island. Two eye-catching zinc cylinders vaguely resemble gigantic snails and contain a cocoon-cozy bar and what may be one of the world's tiniest discos, complete with a heat-sensitive floor that illuminates dancers' movements. There are other bars atop one of the cocoons and on a stage at one end of the restaurant.

The dining area itself is rather — what can I say — stark, and even the view from the windows tends to take second place in this self-conscious, people-watching setting (you, however, should

reserve a window seat on the Hong Kong side). The food, featuring Pacific Rim ingredients brought together in East-meets-West combinations, rarely disappoints. You might start with hot California rolls with crabmeat, avocado, and sake soy, followed by roasted swordfish on dried scallop ravioli and a vegetable ragout, or the Mongolian-style barbecued rack of lamb in a port wine and akala-berry reduction served with a feta, cilantro, and mint salad. Bargain hunters can save bundles by dining early (before 7pm) and opting for the early-bird, three-course fixed-price dinner for HK$340 (US$44). You can also come just for a drink.

In The Peninsula hotel, Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2920 2888,** ext. 3188. Reservations required. Main courses HK$210–HK$280 (US$27–US$36). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 6pm–2am (last order 10:30pm). MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Fook Lam Moon ★★★ CANTONESE Upon entering this restaurant (look for the shrine to the kitchen god at the entrance), you immediately feel as if you've stepped back a couple of decades to a Hong Kong that has all but vanished. The decor is outdated and, unless you're a regular, the waiters are indifferent. Yet for years this has remained *the* place to go for exotic dishes, including shark's fin, bird's nest, and abalone, served in a variety of ways, as well as more down-to-earth dishes such as fried crispy chicken and pan-fried lobster bars. Shark's fin, however, is the obvious number-one choice, with 19 different renditions listed on the menu. If you feel like splurging, prices for half a bowl of shark's fin with crabmeat or shredded chicken begin at HK$280 (US$36). If you are not careful, you could end up spending a small fortune (if you go for the exotic dishes, count on at least HK$1,000/US$130 per person), but whatever you order, it's apt to be memorable. Indeed, some Hong Kong old-timers swear this restaurant serves the best Cantonese food in the world, and it's a favorite of local movers and shakers. Unlike many Chinese restaurants, this establishment provides both small (for 2–4 diners) and large tables.

There's another branch in Wan Chai at 35–45 Johnston Rd. (✆ 852/2866 0663; MTR: Wan Chai), with the same hours.

53–59 Kimberley Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2366 0286.** Reservations are not necessary for lunch but are a good idea for dinner. Main dishes HK$100–HK$190 (US$13–US$24). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–2:30pm and 6–11:30pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Sabatini ★★★ *Finds* ITALIAN In 1954, three Sabatini brothers opened their first restaurant in Rome; their success led them to open branches in Japan and, in 1992, Hong Kong. The dining hall is

rustic and cozy yet refined, with a terra-cotta tile floor, wooden ceiling, and traditional Roman murals, giving it a more casual and relaxed ambience than most hotel Italian restaurants in the same price range. Its menu is a faithful replica of the original Roman fare (along with chef specialties), with liberal doses of olive oil, garlic, and peppers and featuring such popular dishes as baked walnut-crusted sea bass in zucchini-saffron sauce served with lemon-basil risotto, veal escallop with Parma ham and sage, and lamb stew and vegetables served with caramelized chestnuts and mashed potatoes. The pasta, all handmade, ranges from linguine with lobster and fresh basil to a classic spaghetti with clams. The antipasti buffet is so delicious, it's tempting to fill up just on its selections, but save room for the tiramisu. The list of mostly Italian wines is seemingly endless. Evenings feature guitar music; lunch is popular for its reasonable fixed-price menus.

In the Royal Garden hotel, 69 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East. ✆ **852/2733 2000.** Reservations required. Main courses HK$240–HK$360 (US$31–US$47); fixed-price lunch HK$160–HK$250 (US$21–US$32). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm and 6–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Shang Palace ★★★ CANTONESE While many Chinese restaurants have ditched traditional red and gold for a more contemporary look, this remains one of Hong Kong's most elaborately decorated restaurants, with walls of carved red lacquerware and Chinese lanterns hanging from the ceiling. All in all, it fits every expectation of how an "authentic" Chinese restaurant should look. If your mother's experience of Chinese food is limited to chop suey, this is a comfortable and memorable place to bring her, though you also can't go wrong if she's a Chinese-food connoisseur.

The dinner menu is quite extensive, with an emphasis on seafood but also serving chicken, duck, pigeon, beef, and pork, Cantonese-style. Specialties include shark's-fin soup, codfish with chili sauce, steamed prawns in garlic sauce, stewed chicken with ginger and honey sauce, and scallops coated with minced shrimp and pan-fried in black-bean sauce. If cost is no object, you might consider bird's nest with bamboo fungus, which runs HK$430 (US$56) or more. Otherwise, expect to spend about HK$500 (US$65) per person for a royal feast. Lunch is more economical and always includes a dozen or more varieties of dim sum.

In the Shangri-La Hotel, 64 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East. ✆ **852/2733 8754.** Reservations recommended. Main dishes HK$100–HK$255 (US$13–US$33). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–3pm, Sun and holidays 10:30am–3pm; daily 6:30–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

MODERATE

In addition to the choices here, a good standby for Continental cuisine is the Tsim Sha Tsui branch of **Jimmy's Kitchen,** covered in the Central dining section (p. 94).

The Chinese ★★ *Finds* CANTONESE Decorated in stark black and white with a blend of Art Deco and modern Chinese, this was Hong Kong's first Chinese restaurant to ignore the traditional red and gold. This trend-setting place remains one of Hong Kong's most refined Cantonese restaurants, with a small and intimate dining room reminiscent of Chinese teahouses of the 1920s. Traditional booth seating provides intimacy. The innovative menu combining Chinese ingredients with Western presentation changes with the seasons, but if available, the shark's fin served in papaya, deep-fried crispy chicken, minced pigeon with butter lettuce, drunken shrimp, fried lobster balls, and Jade Noodles (spinach noodles served with a choice of various toppings) are all equally delicious. Another great deal is the special dim sum available for lunch, costing HK$28 to HK$48 (US$3.65–US$6.25) per basket.

In the Hyatt Regency, 67 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2311 1234,** ext. 2881. Reservations recommended at dinner. Main dishes HK$95–HK$170 (US$12–US$22); fixed-price lunch HK$320 (US$42); fixed-price dinner HK$460–HK$740 (US$60–US$96). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–3pm, Sun 10:30am–3pm; daily 6:30–11:30pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Dan Ryan's Chicago Grill ★★ *Kids* AMERICAN Located in the huge Ocean Terminal complex at its southernmost end, where cruise ships dock, this casual restaurant serves real American food, with portions big enough to satisfy a hungry cowboy. The decor is Anywhere, U.S.A., but with a difference — since it's located right by the Star Ferry, the Chicago Grill offers views of the famous harbor. The lunch menu is substantial, including such classic American favorites as buffalo chicken wings, potato skins, nachos, New England clam chowder, barbecued ribs, spaghetti, lasagna, chili, great hamburgers (a hit with kids), and large deli sandwiches. There are also lunch specials, available Monday to Friday, priced at HK$65 and HK$75 (US$8.45–US$9.75). The dinner menu is more limited, confined mainly to barbecued steaks, chops, fish, and pasta. Admittedly, most dishes here are a bit pricey, but if you're hungering for the real thing, you might consider it a lifesaver. You can also come just for a drink at its bar, and there are also English-language newspapers for customer perusal.

There's another Dan Ryan's at Pacific Place in Admiralty, 88 Queensway (✆ 852/2845 4600; MTR: Admiralty), open Monday to Thursday from 11am to midnight, Friday from 11am to 2am, Saturday from 9am to 2am, and Sunday from 9am to midnight.

200 Ocean Terminal, Harbour City, Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2735 6111.** Main courses HK$75–HK$240 (US$9.75–US$32) before 6pm, HK$95–HK$298 (US$12–US$39) after 6pm. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11am–midnight; Sat–Sun 10am–midnight. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

El Cid Spanish Restaurant ★ *Value* SPANISH This cheerful restaurant with its red-and-white-checkered tablecloths is one of the best places for a meal on Knutsford Terrace, a narrow lane lined with bars and a few restaurants and located on the northern edge of Tsim Sha Tsui. Recommended are the stuffed baby squid with ink sauce, seafood paella, and codfish with clams in a green sauce; there are also soups and salads. But probably the best thing to do is select from the several dozen tapas on the menu, which can make for wonderful nibbling or out-and-out feasts. Choices include stewed eggplant with herbs and spicy tomato sauce, prawns in olive oil, chorizo, and lamb spareribs with tomato and pine seeds.

There are other El Cid branches at 9–11 Cleveland St., Causeway Bay (✆ 852/2511 0300; MTR: Causeway Bay), open daily from noon to midnight, and Shop 102 in the Murray House, Stanley Plaza, Stanley (✆ 852/2899 0858), open daily from noon to 11:30pm.

12 and 14 Knutsford Terrace, Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2312 1898.** Main courses HK$120–HK$170 (US$16–US$22); tapas HK$45–$65 (US$5.85–US$8.45). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm and 6pm–midnight. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Gaylord ★★ INDIAN This long-established, first-floor restaurant in the heart of Tsim Sha Tsui is classy and comfortable, with private booths and overstuffed sofas. It's popular for its authentic North Indian classics, including tandoori, lamb curry cooked in North Indian spices and herbs, chicken cooked in hot fiery vindaloo curry, prawns cooked with green pepper and spices, and fish with potatoes and tomatoes. There are a dozen vegetarian dishes, and the lunchtime buffet, served every day until 2:30pm except Sundays and public holidays, is a winner. There are also fixed-price dinners for two or more persons, beginning at HK$160 (US$21) per person. Otherwise, expect to spend about HK$250 (US$33) per person for dinner.

23–25 Ashley Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2376 1001.** Main dishes HK$78–HK$198 (US$10–US$26); lunch buffet HK$95 (US$12). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm and 6–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Great Shanghai ★★ *Finds* SHANGHAINESE Established in 1958, this well-known spot in Tsim Sha Tsui is a big old-fashioned dining hall up on the first floor. In addition to its bright lights, white tablecloths, and army of waiters in green shirts, it has an extensive menu with more than 200 items, most in the HK$85-to-HK$140 (US$11–US$18) range. Since the Shanghai area has no cuisine of its own, it has developed an eclectic cuisine, borrowing from neighboring provinces, including Szechuan, and is popular for seasonal dishes. However, this restaurant is about as close as you can get to food the way Mom used to cook in old Shanghai. Try the Shanghainese dumplings, prawns in chili sauce, vegetarian imitation goose, diced chicken with cashews, cold chicken in wine sauce, Szechuan soup, fried pork dumplings, or Peking duck. The house specialty is beggar's chicken for HK$260 (US$34), but it's available only at night; in addition, only a limited number are prepared daily, so call in your order by midafternoon if you want to be assured of getting a bird. My own particular favorite is braised shredded eel, which is cooked in an oily garlic sauce, but all eel dishes here are good. I've also left the ordering entirely up to the waiter and ended up with a well-rounded sampling of Shanghainese food.

26 Prat Ave., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2366 8158.** Main dishes HK$75–HK$195 (US$9.75–US$25). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11am–2:30pm and 6:30–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Harbour Side ★ *Kids* INTERNATIONAL Although located in the elegant InterContinental, this is an informal dining hall, rather plain and bare with a brick floor, wooden chairs, and manicured topiaries, but it's bright and airy because of its three-story-high wall of glass facing the harbor and its mirrors. It offers nonstop all-day dining and views of people walking along the waterfront promenade. Its open kitchen emphasizes light Continental dishes such as pastas and salads, but other vegetarian selections, sandwiches, seafood, and steak are included on the menu, as well as Asian dishes that may include Malaysian chicken curry or Thai spicy prawn soup. If you stick to one of the sandwiches, pizzas, or pasta dishes, you can dine for less than HK$160 (US$21). The children's menu is more substantial than in most restaurants, with such favorites as chicken nuggets and spaghetti but also Chinese dishes like *congee* (rice porridge). On Sundays there's a champagne brunch from 11am to 3pm costing HK$325 (US$42) for adults and half price for children.

In the Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong, Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2721 1211.** Main courses HK$120–HK$295 (US$16–US$38). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 6am–midnight. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

The Pizzeria ★★ *Value* ITALIAN Located on the second floor of the Kowloon Hotel (just behind The Peninsula), this casual and bustling dining hall with large windows is one of my favorite places in Tsim Sha Tsui for a relaxed meal at good prices, especially when I want great pizza or pasta and don't feel like getting dressed up. Despite its name, this restaurant specializes in pasta, with an a la carte menu that changes often but has included such mouthwatering choices as homemade fettuccine with lobster and spinach in tomato cream sauce and penne pasta with smoked chicken and porcini mushrooms in creamy herb sauce. There are also four different kinds of pizza, and main courses have included baked ocean trout with artichoke in phyllo pastry on green peas and morel sauce and roast duck breast on braised duck leg with orange, pilaf rice, and grilled bell pepper. Save room for dessert — they're all delicious. For the budget-conscious, lunch is a great time to come, when a trip through the antipasto and salad bar, choice of main dish (meat, pasta, or pizza), and dessert and coffee, are all available at a great price. Incidentally, to reach The Pizzeria, you have to walk past Window Café, which specializes in international buffets.

In the Kowloon Hotel, 19–21 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2929 2888,** ext. 3322. Reservations recommended. Pasta and pizza HK$125–HK$150 (US$16–US$19); main courses HK$190–HK$205 (US$25–US$27); lunch buffet HK$180 (US$23) Mon–Fri, HK$200 (US$26) Sat–Sun; fixed-price dinner HK$320–HK$350 (US$42–US$45). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 6–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Spring Deer Restaurant ★ *Finds* PEKINGESE An old favorite in Hong Kong, this long-established restaurant offers excellent Pekingese food at reasonable prices. Spring Deer is cheerful and very accessible to foreigners, but don't expect anything fancy; in fact, your tablecloth may have holes in it, but it will be clean — and the place is usually packed with groups of loyal fans. This is one of the best places to come if you want to try its specialty — honey-glazed Peking duck, which costs HK$280 (US$36). Since you'll probably have to wait 40 minutes for the duck if you order it during peak time (7:30–9:30pm), it's best to arrive either before or after the rush. Chicken dishes are also well liked, including the deep-fried chicken in soy sauce, and the handmade noodles are excellent. Other recommendations include the hot-and-sour soup, freshwater shrimp, and stewed ham and cabbage. Most dishes come in small, medium, and large sizes; the small dishes are suitable for two people. Remember, you'll want to order one dish apiece, plus an additional one to share. Unfortunately, since Spring Deer is crowded

with groups, the lone diner is apt to be neglected in the shuffle; it's best to come here only if there are at least two of you.

42 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2366 4012.** Reservations recommended. Small dishes HK$50–HK$90 (US$6.50–US$12). AE, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–3pm and 6–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

INEXPENSIVE

Banana Leaf Curry House ★★ MALAYSIAN/INDIAN/SINGAPOREAN This fast-growing local chain has a good idea — more than 100 choices, including chicken, mutton, beef, seafood, and vegetables, cooked in several varieties of curry; and a gimmick — dishes are presented on banana leaves. Add to that the brisk, efficient service and reasonable prices, and you've got the makings of a winner for cheap Malaysian, Singaporean, and South Indian food. You might want to start with chicken satay and peanut sauce or samosas with a mint chutney. Main dishes run the gamut from Hainan chicken and Malaysian curry crab to vegetarian selections; the dilemma is in making a choice. Tables are crowded and the atmosphere is like a school cafeteria, but that's the nature of the place.

Other conveniently located branches include those on the 15th floor of Chong Hing Square, 601 Nathan Rd., Mong Kok (✆ 852/2332 2525; MTR: Mong Kok), open Monday to Friday from noon to 2:30pm and 6 to 11:30pm, and Saturday and Sunday from noon to 11:30pm; and 440 Jaffe Rd., Causeway Bay (✆ 852/2573 8187; MTR: Causeway Bay), open Monday to Friday from 11am to 3pm and 6 to 11:30pm, and Saturday and Sunday from 11am to 11:30pm.

Golden Crown Ct. (3rd floor), 68 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2721 4821.** Main dishes HK$62–HK$128 (US$8.05–US$17). AE, V. Daily 11am–3pm and 6–11:30pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Fat Angelo's ★ *Value* ITALIAN With its checkered tablecloths, black-and-white family photographs (all hanging crooked on purpose?), wainscoting, half-size curtains, ceiling fans, and other decor reminiscent of a New World Italian restaurant from the first half of the 20th century, this chain offers good value with its hearty, American renditions of Italian food, including pastas ranging from traditional spaghetti marinara to fettuccine Alfredo and main courses that include rosemary roasted chicken, grilled salmon with pesto, and eggplant Parmesan, all of which come with salad and homemade bread. All pastas and main dishes come in two sizes to accommodate the Chinese penchant for sharing, with small dishes

Fun Fact **Did You Know?**

Hong Kong has one restaurant or cafe for every 680 inhabitants; an estimated 1.5 million people eat out daily.

large enough for two to share. If you're a lone diner, you can request a half portion of the small dish. In any case, the emphasis here is on quantity, not quality, though the food isn't bad. And they really pack 'em in; this place is bustling, loud, and slightly chaotic. It's sometimes hard to flag down your waitress, but they're cheerful in a disaster kind of way. All in all, this place is good for a fun outing with a group.

There are two branches on the other side of the harbor, at 414 Jaffe Rd., Causeway Bay (✆ 852/2574 6263; MTR: Causeway Bay), and 49A-C Elgin St., Central (✆ 852/2973 6808; MTR: Central), open the same hours.

33 Ashley Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2730 4788.** Reservations recommended. Small pastas HK$88–HK$135 (US$11–US$18); small main courses HK$125–HK$170 (US$16–US$22); fixed-price lunch (Mon–Fri only) HK$28–$68 (US$3.65–US$8.85). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–11:30pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Happy Garden Noodles & Congee Kitchen *Value* CANTONESE If you've passed all those hole-in-the-wall Chinese restaurants, knowing that they're often much cheaper than establishments catering to tourists but hesitating to enter because no one speaks English, this is the place for you. Small, clean, and with old-fashioned booth seating, a high ceiling, and lacquered stools, it has an English menu and specializes in noodle dishes and *congee* (a rice porridge traditionally eaten for breakfast or a late-night snack and usually flavored with meat, fish, or vegetables). Approximately 40 different kinds of *congee* are available as well as a wide variety of noodle dishes, from braised and stir-fried noodles to shrimp wonton noodles and noodles in soup with barbecued pork. Located about a 4-minute walk from the Star Ferry, it's good for a quick and inexpensive meal after visiting neighborhood bars.

76 Canton Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2377 2604.** Main dishes HK$22–HK$85 (US$2.85–US$11). No credit cards. Daily 7am–12:30am. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Main Street Deli ★★ *Finds* AMERICAN/SANDWICHES Hong Kong's first traditional New York–style deli comes as close as you can get to the real thing — its chef trained at the 2nd Avenue

Deli in the Big Apple and the authentic ingredients are flown in from New York. The tiled floor, open kitchen and deli case, strung sausages, and wood furniture add to the ambience, but the chandeliers left over from a previous restaurant seem woefully out of place. Still, serious deli lovers will find plenty to love, including latkes, matzo ball soup, salads, pizza, pasta, and a large selection of three-decker and hot deli sandwiches, including a Reuben, the restaurant's signature sandwich. There are also entrees that could be a lifesaver for those in desperate need of comfort food, including beef goulash, rotisserie chicken, meatloaf, and beef-stuffed cabbage, but in any case, save room for the cheesecake. Portions are so generous that the restaurant has instituted the doggy bag, a previously unknown concept in Hong Kong.

In the Great Eagle Hotel, 8 Peking Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2375 1133,** ext. 7883. Sandwiches HK$88–HK$138 (US$11–US$18); main courses HK$108–HK$178 (US$14–US$23). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 10am–11pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

2 Central District

VERY EXPENSIVE

Man Wah ★★★ CANTONESE Man Wah has long been one of the most elegant and sophisticated Chinese restaurants in Hong Kong. Traditionally decorated with local rosewood, wood carvings, lanterns that resemble birdcages, and painted silk portraits of Mandarins; and featuring gold tablecloths, exquisite Naruma bone chinaware, 24-carat gold cutlery, fresh flowers, and candles on every table — it's about as romantic as you can get. Unfortunately, although it's located on the 25th floor, only a few tables offer good views of the harbor, so be sure to request a harborside seat when making your reservation. And with a seating capacity of only 62, reservations here are a must.

Although the Cantonese menu changes seasonally, signature dishes usually available include the steamed crab claws with ginger and Chinese rice wine, sautéed filet of sole with green vegetables in a black-bean sauce (complete with a wonderful carving of a dragon fashioned from carrots), anything with shark's fin, and beggar's chicken (order in advance) with its dramatic presentation and costing HK$460 (US$60). Also, if available, the spicy-and-sour soup is divine — piquant and full of noodles, tofu, and mushrooms. Meals here average HK$800 (US$104) without drinks; the fixed-price menu requires a minimum of two persons.

In the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, 5 Connaught Rd., Central. ✆ **852/2522 0111,** ext. 4025. Reservations required. Main dishes HK$98–HK$338 (US$13–US$44);

fixed-price meal HK$588–HK$688 (US$76–US$89). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 6:30–11pm. MTR: Central.

Petrus ★★★★ *Finds* FRENCH Simply put, the views from this 56th-floor restaurant are breathtaking. In fact, they are probably the best of any hotel restaurant on the Hong Kong side; the only place with a better view is atop Victoria Peak. If you can bear to take your eyes off the windows, you'll find the restaurant decorated like a French castle, with the obligatory crystal chandeliers, black marble and gilded columns, statues, thick draperies, Impressionist paintings, murals gracing dome-shaped ceilings, and a pianist playing softly in the background.

The cuisine emphasizes contemporary Mediterranean/French seasonal ingredients, spiced sparingly to complement the dishes' natural aroma and flavor. The menu changes often but has included such intriguing choices as sautéed slice of duck liver with fig sherbet; black-truffle soup with green asparagus and salsify; roast Bresse pigeon with herbs served with a cep purée; and roast Boston lobster served with fennel, morels, and tomato. Probably the best way to sample the continuously new creations is with one of the fixed-price meals. As expected, the wine list — particularly Bordeaux — is among the best in Hong Kong, if not the world. With the impressive blend of great views, refined ambience, excellent cuisine, tables spaced far enough apart for intimacy, and professional staff, this restaurant is a top choice for a splurge, romantic dinner, or special celebration.

In the Island Shangri-La (56th floor), Pacific Place, Supreme Court Rd., Central. ✆ **852/2820 8590.** Reservations recommended. Jacket required. Main courses HK$320–HK$530 (US$42–US$69); fixed-price lunch HK$290–HK$340 (US$38–US$44); fixed-price dinner HK$750–HK$900 (US$97–US$117). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–3pm; daily 6:30–10:30pm. MTR: Admiralty.

Vong ★★★★ FRANCO-ASIAN CROSSOVER Chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten, who made a name for himself with several well-known New York establishments, set Hong Kong abuzz when he opened his much-talked-about restaurant on the 25th floor of the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in 1997. Matching Petrus for its spectacular views of the harbor, this chic, black-and-gold venue serves what may well be the best interpretation of East-meets-West Franco-Asian cuisine this side of the hemisphere, with exquisite combinations that can set taste buds dancing with excitement. Appetizers range from shrimp satay dipped in a fresh oyster sauce to sautéed foie gras with ginger and mango. All main courses are tempting — perhaps you'll

choose the spiny lobster with Thai herbs, the steamed sea bass and carrot confit with cumin seed and coriander, or the chicken marinated in lemongrass with sweet rice steamed in banana leaf.

If choosing only one dish causes anguish, order the five-course Tasting Menu for HK$468 (US$61) per person, though you'll have to convince everyone else at your table to do the same, since it's available only if the entire table chooses it. At lunchtime you can save money by ordering one of the Black Plate or White Plate menus, which comes with six exquisitely prepared items for HK$218 (US$28). My lunch plate contained a crab spring roll, raw tuna and vegetables rolled in rice paper, prawn satays, lobster wrapped in daikon, curry chicken satays, and crunchy cress salad. The only complaint is that Vong is so popular and busy that its activity and noise level can be like an outdoor market, making it a good place for people-watching but not for a romantic tête-à-tête.

In the Mandarin Oriental Hotel (25th floor), 5 Connaught Rd., Central. ✆ **852/2522 0111.** Reservations required. Main courses HK$198–HK$338 (US$26–US$44); fixed-price lunch HK$218–HK$258 (US$28–US$34). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm; daily 6pm–midnight. MTR: Central.

EXPENSIVE

China Lan Kwai Fong ★★ CANTONESE This retro-style restaurant in trendy Lan Kwai Fong is one of Hong Kong's hottest and classiest Chinese restaurants, decorated with antiques, hanging lanterns, ceiling fans, and giant bird cages. While the emphasis is on Cantonese food, it offers specialties from other regions as well, including Shanghai, Beijing, and Szechuan. Prawns, for example, are available in six variations, from stir-fried with chiles (Szechuan) to sautéed with black beans and green pepper (Cantonese). Garoupa comes fresh from the restaurant's own tanks. Peking duck (costing HK$380/US$49) and beggar's chicken (order in advance for HK$480/US$62) are also available. An all-you-can eat dim sum brunch is available weekends and holidays for HK$138 (US$18).

17–22 Lan Kwai Fong, Central. ✆ **852/2536 0968.** Reservations recommended. Main dishes HK$125–HK$250 (US$16–US$32); buffet lunch HK$138 (US$18). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm, Sat–Sun 11:30am–3pm; Sun–Thurs 6:30–11pm, Fri–Sat 6:30pm–midnight. MTR: Central.

Hunan Garden ★★ *Finds* HUNANESE Although the chile-rich cuisine of Hunan province is quite popular in Taiwan, this is one of the few Hunan restaurants in Hong Kong. It's puzzling, because Hunanese food is very spicy, and one would think that with the booming popularity of Thai and Szechuan food in the SAR, Hunanese food would catch on. Perhaps the next-door Hong Kong Station, terminus of the Airport Express Line, will bring a new popularity. In any case, this is a great restaurant, both in decor and food.

It's decorated in hot pink and green, and the motif is clearly lotus (Hunan province is famous for its lotus). The dining area is spacious, with tables spread luxuriously far apart. But the real treat is the food. The chefs were trained in both Hunan province and Taiwan and they don't tone down the spiciness of their authentic dishes. Start your meal with one of the soups like the Hunan minced-chicken soup, a clear soup base with ginger and mousse of chicken, served piping hot in a length of bamboo. If you like hot-and-spicy foods, you'll love the braised bean curd with shredded meat and chili, developed by one of Hunan province's most famous chefs. Other recommended dishes include the honey-glazed Hunan ham served in pancakes and fried chicken with chili and garlic. As a special treat, try one of the Hunanese wines.

The Forum (3rd floor), Exchange Sq., Central. ✆ **852/2868 2880.** Reservations recommended. Main dishes HK$72–HK$156 (US$9.35–US$20). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–3pm and 5:30–11:30pm. MTR: Central.

M at the Fringe ★★★ *Finds* CONTINENTAL For a memorable, unusual dining experience, head for this delightful restaurant, located on the upper floor of a former dairy farm building, which is also home of the Fringe Club's theater (p. 161). A meal here is a treat in more ways than one — the artsy furnishings are a feast for the eyes, while the food, influenced by cuisines along the Mediterranean, is to die for. The handwritten menu changes every 3 months but is always creative and always includes lamb and vegetarian selections. An example of the former is a salt-encased, slowly baked leg of lamb with celery root and potato gratin, French beans, and baby carrots. For dessert, don't pass up the Pavlova.

2 Lower Albert Rd., Central. ✆ **852/2877 4000.** Reservations strongly recommended. Main courses HK$188–HK$212 (US$24–US$28); fixed-price lunch HK$148–HK$168 (US$19–US$22). AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2:30pm; Mon–Sat 7–10:30pm, Sun 7–10pm. MTR: Central.

Va Bene ★★★ ITALIAN This stylish, upscale Italian restaurant, in the middle of Central's Lan Kwai Fong nightlife district, strives for the simplicity of a rustic Italian villa with its sponged, mustard-hued walls, a sky-blue ceiling, and rows of terra-cotta pots serving as the main decorations. With consistently creative and excellent food, it's extremely popular with Hong Kong's well-heeled expat community, making it a lively and boisterous — though cramped — spot for a meal. Perhaps you'll want to start with carpaccio, wafer-thin beef tenderloin served with fresh Parmesan and truffle olive oil, followed by homemade potato-and-leek ravioli with tomatoes and

parsley sauce. As a main course, you can choose from a number of veal, beef, and seafood offerings, including veal scaloppine; braised lamb shank with saffron risotto; or scampi in a lemon, capers, and white-wine sauce. Good Italian wines, great desserts, and attentive service round out the meal; expect to spend about HK$600 (US$78) per person, without wine.

58–62 D'Aguilar St., Central. ✆ **852/2845 5577.** Reservations required. Pasta HK$188–HK$228 (US$24–US$30); main courses HK$198–HK$288 (US$26–US$37); fixed-price lunch HK$140 (US$18). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2:30pm; Sun–Thurs 7–11pm, Fri–Sat 7pm–midnight. MTR: Central.

MODERATE

Several moderately priced restaurants already covered in the Tsim Sha Tsui section have branches in Central, such as **Dan Ryan's Chicago Grill** (p. 81), located in Pacific Place and offering American classics.

Aqua ★★ *Finds* FUSION/CROSSOVER Of the several dozen independent restaurants that have sprung up in the Central/SoHo area during the past few years, this counts among the best. It sits on a busy corner with a glass facade, but inside, it's cool and collected, with an open kitchen set unobtrusively in a corner and low lighting that sets the mood for romantic dining. Australian chef Gregory Bunt creates a constantly changing menu that capitalizes on his years working all over Asia, with dishes that meld various flavors, ingredients, and textures in surprising combinations. For starters, try the tasting platter for two that is a potpourri of mouthwatering creations. Move on to such entrees as yellowfin tuna grilled with olive crust, basil potatoes, confit tomato and anchovy sauce or cumin-crusted lamb loin with smoky aubergine, tomato ginger, and spice jus. Fixed-price lunches include grazing at an ample salad bar, making it a very good bargain.

49 Hollywood Rd., Central. ✆ **852/2545 9889.** Reservations recommended. Main courses HK$135–HK$198 (US$18–US$26); fixed-price lunch HK$88–HK$108 (US$11–US$14); fixed-price dinner HK$388 (US$50). AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs noon–midnight; Fri noon–2am; Sat 10:30am–2am; Sun 10:30am–midnight. MTR: Central.

Cafe des Artistes ★★ FRENCH This pleasant and comfortable restaurant overlooks the action of Lan Kwai Fong with large open windows, making it great for people-watching and imparting a feeling of being above it all. But the real draw is the cuisine from southern France, expertly rendered by the chef, imported from Nice, into culinary masterpieces. The homemade goose-liver terrine

is not to be missed; other recommended dishes include the roasted sea bass with a delicate bouquet of Provence spices, the pan-roasted lamb with potatoes and Roquefort sauce, and beef and tartar of *cepe* (flap mushrooms) with goose liver. Be sure to save room for desserts like the hot chocolate cake with coconut ice cream and raspberry caramel. Dinners average HK$500 (US$65), without wine.

California Tower (ground floor), 30–32 D'Aguilar St., Central. ✆ **852/2526 3880.** Main courses HK$175–HK$195 (US$23–US$25); fixed-price lunch HK$165 (US$21); fixed-price dinner HK$275–HK$425 (US$36–US$55). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm; Sun–Thurs 7–11pm, Fri–Sat 7–11:30pm. MTR: Central.

cafe TOO ★★★ *Finds* INTERNATIONAL Leave it to the Island Shangri-La to take a common dining concept and turn it into a feasting extravaganza. Quite simply, this is the most interesting buffet I've seen in Hong Kong. Light and airy with windows overlooking the lush greenery of Hong Kong Park, contemporary decor, and a well-trained staff dressed in hip traditional Chinese jackets and vests, this restaurant features open kitchens and seven "stations" of food presentations spread throughout the room, thereby dispelling the assembly-line atmosphere of most buffets and giving it a theatrical touch. Browse the appetizer-and-salad table, a cold seafood counter with sushi, fresh oysters, crab, and other delights, a Chinese section with dim sum and main courses, Western hot entrees, pastas that are prepared to order and run the gamut from Chinese to Italian, and Asian dishes from Thai curries to Indian tandoori. But don't fill up, because the dessert table is the crowning glory. The wine list, too, is very impressive. Come here after shopping in Pacific Place or visiting the park's Museum of Tea Ware.

In the Island Shangri-La Hotel, Pacific Place, Supreme Court Rd., Central. ✆ **852/2820 8571,** ext. 8571. Reservations recommended. Lunch buffet HK$235 (US$31) Mon–Sat, HK$275 (US$36) Sun and holidays; dinner buffet HK$308 (US$40) Sun–Thurs, HK$338 (US$44) Fri–Sat and holidays. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2:30pm and 6:30–9:30pm; Sat–Sun noon–3pm and 7–10pm. MTR: Admiralty.

Indochine 1929 ★★ VIETNAMESE Designed to resemble a breezy, 1920s veranda from Vietnam's French colonial era, this Lan Kwai Fong eatery serves delicious Indochinese cuisine to a consciously trendy crowd. Start with the spring rolls stuffed with shrimp, pork, and herbs or the hot-and-sour fish soup. Other specialties are the fish prepared Hanoi style, with dill, turmeric, rice vermicelli, and peanuts; the salt-and-pepper soft-shell crabs; the beef tenderloin with tomato; and grilled eggplant with scallion oil and soy sauce. If you've never had Vietnamese food, this restaurant should make you an instant convert.

California Tower (2nd floor), 30–32 D'Aguilar, Central. ✆ **852/2869 7399.** Reservations recommended. Main dishes HK$115–HK$260 (US$15–US$34); fixed-price lunch HK$88–HK$148 (US$11–US$19). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm; daily 6:30–11pm. MTR: Central.

Jimmy's Kitchen ★★ CONTINENTAL This restaurant opened in 1928, a replica of a similar, American-owned restaurant in Shanghai. Now one of Hong Kong's oldest Western restaurants, Jimmy's Kitchen has had several homes before moving in the 1960s to its present site. Some of its waiters are descendants from the original staff. The atmosphere reminds me of an American steakhouse, with white tablecloths, dark-wood paneling, and elevator music, but it's a favorite with older foreigners living in Hong Kong and serves dependably good, unpretentious European food. The daily specials are written on a blackboard, and an extensive a la carte menu offers salads and soups, steaks, chicken, Indian curries, and a seafood selection that includes sole, scallops, and the local garoupa. It's a good place also for corned beef and cabbage, beef Stroganoff, and hearty German fare, including Wiener schnitzel (breaded veal), pig's knuckle, and Knockwurst sausage.

There's another branch at 29 Ashley Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (✆ 852/2376 0327), open daily from noon to 11pm.

1 Wyndham St., Central. ✆ **852/2526 5293.** Main courses HK$116–HK$205 (US$15–US$27). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–3pm and 6–11pm. MTR: Central.

Luk Yu Tea House ★★★ CANTONESE Luk Yu, first opened in 1933, is the most famous teahouse remaining in Hong Kong. In fact, unless you have a time machine, you can't get any closer to old Hong Kong than this wonderful Art Deco–era Cantonese restaurant, with its ceiling fans, spittoons, individual wooden booths for couples, marble tabletops, wood paneling, and stained-glass windows. The cashier even uses an abacus to figure bills! It's also one of the best places to try a few Chinese teas, including *bo lai* (a fermented black tea, which is the most common tea in Hong Kong; also spelled bo lay), jasmine, *lung ching* (a green tea), and *sui sin* (narcissus or daffodil).

But Luk Yu is most famous for its dim sum, served from 7am to 5:30pm. The problem for foreigners, however, is that the place is always packed with regulars who have their own special places to sit, and the staff is sometimes surly to newcomers. In addition, if you come after 11am, dim sum is no longer served by trolley but from an English menu with pictures but no prices, which could end up being quite expensive unless you ask before ordering. If you want to

come during the day (certainly when Luk Yu is most colorful), try to bring along a Chinese friend. Otherwise, consider coming for dinner when it's not nearly so hectic and there's an English menu listing more than 200 items, including all the Cantonese favorites.

24–26 Stanley St., Central. ✆ **852/2523 5464.** Main dishes HK$100–HK$220 (US$13–US$29); dim sum HK$25–HK$55 (US$3.25–US$7.15). MC, V. Daily 7am–10pm. MTR: Central.

Sichuan Garden ★ SZECHUAN Another Maxim's restaurant, the Sichuan Garden is in the chic Landmark Building. The atmosphere is bright, spotless, and elegantly simple, the food excellent, and the service attentive. It's quite popular and almost always crowded, especially at lunch. The hot-and-spicy dishes are clearly marked on the 80-item menu to help the uninitiated, though those who appreciate fiery food will find that dishes here are only mildly hot. Recommended are the hot-and-sour soup, fried prawns in chili sauce, shredded pork in hot garlic sauce, bean curd with minced beef in a pungent sauce, smoked duck, and pigeon smoked in camphor wood and tea leaves. I ordered the pigeon and found it quite good, but I was not prepared to have the head brought out as well — perhaps as a decoration (at least, I assume it wasn't for consumption).

There's another Sichuan Garden in the Pacific Place mall at Shop 004, 88 Queensway, Central (✆ 852/2845 8433; MTR: Admiralty), open Monday to Saturday from 11:30am to 3pm and 5:30pm to midnight, and Sunday from 10:30am to 3pm and 5:30pm to midnight.

Gloucester Tower (3rd floor), Landmark Building, Des Voeux Rd., Central. ✆ **852/2521 4433.** Reservations recommended. Main dishes HK$75–HK$160 (US$9.75–US$21). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–3pm and 5:30–11pm. MTR: Central.

Thai Lemongrass ★★ THAI Rattan furniture, fake banana trees, and calm statues of Buddha set the mood in this upscale Thai restaurant in Lan Kwai Fong. The menu, drawing from regional cuisines from throughout Thailand and prepared by Thai chefs, includes such favorites as soft-shell crab with chili and garlic on fried basil leaves; chili crabs; lobster tails in sweet tamarind sauce with roasted garlic and shallots; and roast duck in red curry with grapes and aubergine. Unlike most Thai restaurants in Hong Kong, which often serve a watered-down version of Thai food, this one serves the real thing.

30–32 D'Aguilar St., Central. ✆ **852/2905 1688.** Main dishes HK$98–HK$215 (US$13–US$28); fixed-price lunch HK$138 (US$18). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm; Mon–Thurs 6:30–11pm, Fri–Sat 6:30–11:30pm, Sun and holidays 6–10:30pm. MTR: Central.

Tokio Joe ✪ JAPANESE As its quirky name suggests, this is a hip sushi bar catering to Lan Kwai Fong's youthful nighttime revelers. Dimly lit even for lunch, it offers sushi (raw fish on vinegared rice) and sashimi (raw fish) a la carte, as well as combination platters. A platter of assorted sashimi large enough for two people to share as an appetizer costs HK$490 (US$64); sushi combinations run from HK$150 to HK$360 (US$20–US$47). Unique, however, are the California-style roll creations, like the deep-fried soft-shell crab with avocado, cucumber, crab roe, and mayonnaise, or the roll with crabmeat, asparagus, sliced fish, mushroom, and egg. Probably the best deal is one of the set lunches, featuring sashimi, tempura, or a box lunch. As the menu states, this restaurant has a "slightly irreverent, innovative, and casual approach to the Japanese culinary experience." Luckily, it succeeds.

16 Lan Kwai Fong, Central. ✆ **852/2525 1889.** Sushi a la carte HK$40–HK$65 (US$5.20–US$8.45); fixed-price lunch HK$120–HK$190 (US$16–US$25). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm; daily 6:30–11pm. MTR: Central.

Yung Kee ✪✪ CANTONESE Popular for decades, Yung Kee started out in 1942 as a small shop selling roast goose, which did so well that it soon expanded into a very successful Cantonese enterprise. Through the years, it has won numerous food awards and is the only restaurant in Hong Kong ever to be included in *Fortune* magazine's top 15 restaurants of the world (although, it must be added, the award was in 1968). Its specialty is still roast goose with plum sauce, cooked to perfection with tender meat on the inside and crispy skin on the outside and available only for dinner for HK$380 (US$49). Other specialties include roasted suckling pig or duck, cold steamed chicken, barbecued pork, bean curd combined with prawns, sautéed filet of garoupa, any of the fresh seafood, and thousand-year-old eggs (which are included with each meal). Dining is on one of the upper three floors, but if all you want is a bowl of *congee* or takeout, join the office workers who pour in for a quick meal on the informal ground floor. This place is very Chinese, and unless you order the roast goose, you can dine here for as little as HK$300 (US$39) per person.

32–40 Wellington St., Central. ✆ **852/2522 1624.** Main dishes HK$68–HK$180 (US$8.85–US$23); dim sum HK$12–HK$24 (US$1.55–US$3.10). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11am–11:30pm. MTR: Central.

Zen Chinese ✪✪ CANTONESE Both its name and its appearance leave no doubt that this is no ordinary Cantonese restaurant. You won't find any reds and golds here, or any glittering chandeliers.

Rather, the restaurant is somewhat austere in Zen Buddhist style, with a concrete ceiling, double-layered white tablecloths, fresh flowers on each table, and an open dining hall that allows customers to see and be seen. To offset the simplicity and starkness of the room, a succession of large glass bowls running the length of the restaurant are suspended from the ceiling, creating a never-ending cascade as water trickles from one bowl to the next; some think the arrangement looks like a dragon.

As for the food, there is a wide variety of Cantonese specialties that border on the nouvelle. Try the shark's-fin soup with minced chicken, sautéed prawns with dried chili and walnuts, or sautéed crab in an earthen pot. Unlike those of most Chinese restaurants, the wine list is rather extensive, though alcohol will greatly add to your bill. With most dishes averaging HK$90 to HK$130 (US$12–US$17), you can easily dine here for around HK$300 to HK$400 (US$39–US$52) if you abstain. For lunch, you can eat even more cheaply, with dim sum available for HK$28 to HK$48 (US$3.65–US$6.25) a plate.

Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central. ✆ **852/2845 4555.** Reservations recommended. Main dishes HK$90–HK$150 (US$10–US$19). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–3pm, Sat 11:30am–5pm, Sun 10:30am–5pm; daily 5:30–11pm. MTR: Admiralty.

INEXPENSIVE

Some of the inexpensive restaurants reviewed in the previous Tsim Sha Tsui section have branches in Central, such as **Fat Angelo's** (p. 85), which is renowned for its massive portions of American-style Italian food.

In addition, many restaurants in the moderate category above offer lunches that even the budget-conscious can afford. Be sure, too, to check the section on "Dim Sum," later in this chapter.

Finally, another good place for a casual, inexpensive meal is in the basement of **Seibu department store** in Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, in Central (take the MTR to Admiralty), where various counters offer Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese food, as well as sandwiches and pasta, daily from 11am to 10pm. You can dine here for less than HK$120 (US$16).

Baci Pizza ★ ITALIAN This tiny, casual, welcoming pizzeria offers good durum or homemade pasta and various kinds of wafer-thin pizza, including a "four seasons" pizza with cheese, mushrooms, black olives, ham, and artichokes, and a pizza with four cheeses — Gorgonzola, Parmesan, mozzarella, and fontina.

1 Lan Kwai Fong (1st floor), Central. ✆ **852/2840 0153.** Pizzas and pastas HK$90–HK$185 (US$12–US$24). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm; Mon–Thurs 7–11pm, Fri–Sat 7–11:30pm, Sun 6:30–10:30pm. MTR: Central.

3 Causeway Bay & Wan Chai

VERY EXPENSIVE

Grissini ★★★ ITALIAN This stylish, airy Italian restaurant echoes the palatial setting of the Grand Hyatt Hotel, with a tall ceiling, parquet floors, slick black furniture, and ceiling-to-floor windows offering a spectacular view of the harbor — day and night. Dining is on two levels, giving everyone a ringside seat. The menu offers some of the best Northern Italian fare in town. Although the menu changes often, it always includes the *antipasto misto,* a selection of appetizers, and if you're really hungry, you might want to follow it with one of the pasta or risotto dishes, such as the eggplant and mozzarella–filled ravioli with tomato, olives, and basil, or the saffron risotto with Marsala-glazed goose liver. Main dishes have included braised mussels, clams, scampi, prawns, scallops, monkfish, and lobster tail in a tomato, olive, caper, and marjoram broth, and roasted quail breasts wrapped in pancetta and filled with goose liver. Expect to spend a least HK$650 (US$84) per person for dinner without wine, though the excellent Italian wines on hand are perfect accompaniments. At lunch, there is lighter fare and more choices of pasta and risotto. Whether for lunch or dinner, you can't go wrong dining here.

In the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong Hotel, 1 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai. ✆ **852/2588 1234,** ext. 7313. Reservations required. Main courses HK$270–HK$470 (US$35–US$61); fixed-price lunch (Mon–Fri only) HK$275 (US$36); Sun brunch HK$350 (US$45). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm and 7–11pm. MTR: Wan Chai.

EXPENSIVE

Fook Lam Moon (p. 79), famous for its exotic Cantonese fare and already covered in the Tsim Sha Tsui dining section above, also has a branch in Wan Chai.

One Harbour Road ★★ CANTONESE For elegant Chinese dining in Wan Chai, head to the lobby of the Grand Hyatt Hotel, where a glass bubble elevator will deliver you directly to this eighth-floor restaurant. Designed to resemble the terrace of an elegant 1930s taipan mansion, it's bright and airy, with fresh flowers on every table, and its split-level dining offers views of the harbor. A profusion of plants, a large lotus pond, and the sound of running water give the illusion of outdoor dining; tables spread far apart

provide privacy. The extensive Cantonese menu, adapted to Western tastes but wonderful just the same, offers the usual shark's-fin specialties, abalone, bird's nest, Peking duck (order in advance),

beggar's chicken (order in advance), and roast goose (which costs substantially more than the prices given below). Specialties include braised shark's fin with crab roe, crispy duck with mango and grapefruit, deep-fried crispy eel with cinnamon blossoms, and deep-fried crispy chicken skin. There are also fixed-price lunch and dinner menus, which require a minimum order for two people.

In the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong Hotel, 1 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai. ✆ **852/2588 1234,** ext. 7338. Reservations required. Main dishes HK$140–HK$250 (US$18–US$32). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm and 6:30–10:30pm. MTR: Wan Chai.

TOTT'S Asian Grill & Bar ★★★ INTERNATIONAL/FUSION This flashy restaurant seems to suffer from an identity crisis: gigantic Chinese paint brushes at the entrance and a blood-red interior with zebra-striped chairs. I don't know whether I'm in Africa or China until I look at the fabulous view from the restaurant's 34th-floor perch. This is Hong Kong at its most eclectic, funky self, and though the setting seems contrived, the restaurant itself is relaxed, fun, and highly recommended for its innovative and varied East-meets-West fusion cuisine. Come early for a drink in the restaurant's bar (happy hour 5–8pm), or retire there after dinner for live music and dancing Monday through Saturday nights.

There's also an outdoor terrace where you can take your drinks with you to enjoy the view. A glass-enclosed kitchen reveals food being prepared in woks, over charcoal grills, and in tandoori ovens. There's also a sushi bar. The menu is diverse in cuisine and price, allowing diners to eat moderately priced dishes like creamy risotto with pearl onions, broad beans, grilled mushrooms, and house-dried tomatoes, or go all out on tandoori-roasted salmon filet on basil whipped potatoes and crisp vegetable chips, or free-range lemon-marinated chicken breast stuffed with goat cheese and sun-dried yellow tomatoes, served with homemade red bell-pepper pasta. This place is a good choice for those who want dining and entertainment in one spot, as well as for those entertaining first-time visitors to Hong Kong.

In the Excelsior Hotel, 281 Gloucester Rd., Causeway Bay. ✆ **852/2837 6786.** Reservations recommended for dinner (request a window seat). Main courses HK$168–HK$328 (US$22–US$43); fixed-price lunch buffet HK$198 (US$26), Sun brunch HK$298 (US$39). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm, Sun 11:30am–3pm; Mon–Sat 6:30–11pm, Sun 6:30–10pm. MTR: Causeway Bay.

MODERATE

Several restaurants already covered in the Tsim Sha Tsui dining section, above, have branches in Wan Chai or Causeway Bay. A few of these are located on the 11th and 12th floors of Times Square,

1 Matheson St. in Causeway Bay. Another Kowloon restaurant with branches in Wan Chai and Causeway Bay is **El Cid** (p. 82), excellent for tapas and Spanish cuisine.

Red Pepper ★★ SZECHUAN Open since 1970, the Red Pepper has a large following among the city's expatriates, many of whom seem to come so often that they know everyone in the place. It's a very relaxing, small restaurant, with a rather quaint decor of carved dragons on the ceiling and Chinese lanterns. Specialties include fried prawns with chili sauce on a sizzling platter, sour-pepper soup, fried garoupa with sweet-and-sour sauce, smoked duck marinated with oranges, and shredded chicken with hot garlic sauce and dry-fried string beans. Most dishes are available in two sizes, with the small dishes suitable for two people. Litchi tea is a good accompaniment.

7 Lan Fong Rd., Causeway Bay. ✆ **852/2577 3811.** Reservations recommended, especially at dinner. Small dishes HK$85–HK$130 (US$11–US$17). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–11:15pm (last order). MTR: Causeway Bay.

The Viceroy ★★ *Finds* INDIAN Under the same management as the long-popular Gaylord in Tsim Sha Tsui, this contemporary restaurant has something its sister establishment doesn't — outdoor seating on a terrace with great views of the harbor, Wan Chai waterfront, and Kowloon. In the evening, the experience is almost magical, making it a good choice for a romantic dinner. On days when the weather doesn't cooperate (too cold, too hot, or rainy), indoor dining is a good second choice, with large windows offering the same views. Although the innovative menu changes often, tandoori dishes may range from lamb and prawns to lobster. In addition to curries and dishes like roast chicken in yogurt and spices, there are also a fair number of vegetarian dishes, from potatoes cooked with curry leaves to yellow lentils with spinach. The lunch buffet, offered weekdays only, is a steal.

Sun Hung Kai Centre (2nd floor), 30 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai. ✆ **852/2827 7777.** Main dishes HK$62–HK$148 (US$8.05–US$19); lunch buffet (Mon–Fri only) HK$108 (US$14). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 6–11pm. MTR: Wan Chai.

INEXPENSIVE

The **Banana Leaf Curry House** and **Fat Angelo's,** reviewed in the Tsim Sha Tsui section, all have branches in Wan Chai or Causeway Bay. See p. 85 for both.

In addition to the recommendations below, be sure to go through the moderate section above for inexpensive buffet and fixed-price lunches.

Chili Club *Value* THAI This simple upstairs restaurant wastes no money on decor. In fact, the only hint that you're in Asia comes from the rattan chairs and that the service is indifferent at best. But the seafood, curries, and noodles, which include all the Thai favorites, are as spicy as this national cuisine should be. What's more, the price is right, making this one of Hong Kong's best dining values. Try to get a seat near the window, where you can watch the action on the street below, and, if possible, avoid the lunchtime rush.

88 Lockhart Rd., Wan Chai. ✆ **852/2527 2872.** Main dishes HK$42–HK$130 (US$5.45–US$17). AE, MC, V. Daily noon–3pm and 6–10:30pm. MTR: Wan Chai.

Open Kitchen ★★ *Finds* INTERNATIONAL This self-serve cafeteria, near the convention center and Grand Hyatt Hotel, is bright with natural lighting and gets my vote as the best place in Wan Chai for an inexpensive and quick meal. Not only does it offer a good selection of food at very reasonable prices, but it also boasts a view of the harbor and even has a tiny outdoor terrace. True to its name, chefs working in an open kitchen prepare everything from lamb chops, grilled steak, and tandoori chicken to grilled Cajun salmon and spring chicken. Diners can also choose from four or five kinds of pasta, along with a choice of sauce. Lighter fare includes a salad bar, soups, sandwiches, sushi, quiche, and desserts. You can also come just for a drink (I often see people writing postcards or reading a book here in the afternoon), but the minimum charge per person is HK$20 (US$2.60).

Hong Kong Arts Centre (6th floor), 2 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai. ✆ **852/2827 2923.** Main courses HK$70–HK$90 (US$9.10–US$12). AE, MC, V. Sat–Thurs 11am–9:30pm; Fri 11am–11pm. MTR: Wan Chai.

4 Around Hong Kong Island

VICTORIA PEAK

MODERATE

The Peak Lookout ★★ INTERNATIONAL Although it's on The Peak, located across the street from the Peak tram terminus, there are only limited views of the South China Sea from the Peak Lookout's terrace. And yet, it has long been a Hong Kong favorite, despite a recent change of name, ownership, and menu. A former tram station, it's a delightful place for a meal, with exposed granite walls, tall timber-trussed ceiling, open fireplace, wooden floor, and a greenhouselike room that extends into the garden. You can also sit outdoors amid the lush growth where you can actually hear birds

singing — one of the best outdoor dining opportunities in Hong Kong on a glorious day (be sure to request a table outdoors if that's what you want). Musicians entertain nightly with oldies but goldies. The menu is eclectic, offering soups (from cream of asparagus to the classic Thai seafood soup Tom Yam Goong), sandwiches, and a combination of American, Chinese, Indian, and Southeast Asian dishes, including tandoori chicken *tikka,* Thai noodles, penne with prawns, grilled steaks and salmon, and curries like Thai green chicken curry with coconut milk.

121 Peak Rd., Victoria Peak. ✆ **852/2849 1000.** Reservations required for dinner and all weekend meals. Main courses HK$102–HK$238 (US$13–US$31). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 10:30am–11:30pm; Sat–Sun 8:30am–1am. Peak tram.

INEXPENSIVE

Marché Mövenpick ★ *Kids* INTERNATIONAL This Swiss chain has been very successful in Europe with its "marketplace" concept in self-service dining, and with the international crowds that visit The Peak, my guess is that it will do quite well here, too. For one thing, it's located in the Peak Tower and offers great views over Hong Kong. In addition, its food is reasonably priced and varied enough to please even fickle palates, the staff is efficient and friendly, and there's even a children's corner, with a small slide, toys, crayons, and other diversions, making it a good place for families. Upon entering, you'll be given a card, which is stamped each time you add a dish to your tray. There are various counters offering different foods, including salads, pizza, pasta, vegetables, sushi, Chinese dishes, and entrees ranging from grilled pork chops and roasted spring chicken to king prawns and sole. You can take as much or as little as you wish — if you're coming for drinks, try to hit the daily 4-to-7pm happy hour. Otherwise, good dining deals are the three-course fixed-price lunches available weekdays only and the dinner buffets. The two-floor restaurant is divided into various themed rooms, each representing a different country, some with better views than others, so be sure to wander.

Peak Tower (levels 6 and 7), 128 Peak Rd., Victoria Peak. ✆ **852/2849 2000.** Main courses HK$65–HK$80 (US$8.45–US$10); fixed-price lunch Mon–Fri HK$78 (US$10); dinner buffet daily HK$278 (US$36). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11am–11pm. Peak tram.

STANLEY

In addition to the restaurants described here, **El Cid** (p. 82), already described in the Tsim Sha Tsui section and located in the Murray

House, offers a dreamy view of the sea from its outside terrace, a live band Tuesday through Sunday evenings, and an expansive menu of tapas and Spanish food.

INEXPENSIVE

Chilli N Spice *Value* THAI/SOUTHEAST ASIAN Located in the historic Murray House, a massive, colonnaded stone structure built in Central in 1843, dismantled, and rebuilt here stone for stone, this restaurant boasts views of the sea from its outdoor terrace and serves mostly traditional Thai food as well as popular Southeast Asian dishes. You might wish to start with minced shrimp, pork and corn in a pastry shell, or Indonesian satays. For a main course, you might choose the Singaporean-style fried curry crab; the tiger prawns with lemongrass, dried chile, and garlic; or the Saigon-style fried beef tenderloin. It's a relaxing place to end a day of shopping, and affordable, too, with most dinners costing around HK$200 (US$26).

Shop 101, Murray House, Stanley Plaza, Stanley. ✆ **852/2899 0147.** Main courses HK$50–HK$138 (US$6.50–US$18); fixed-price lunch HK$45–HK$62 (US$5.85–US$8.05). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–11:30pm; Sun 11am–11pm. Bus: 6, 6A, 6X, 260, or 973.

ABERDEEN

MODERATE

Jumbo Floating Restaurant *Overrated* CANTONESE No doubt you've heard about Hong Kong's floating restaurant in Aberdeen. Although often included in Hong Kong's organized nighttime tours, it's no longer touted by the tourist office as something every visitor must see — there are simply too many other restaurants that are more authentic, more affordable, and have better food. However, if you've always wanted to eat in a floating restaurant, head for the Jumbo Floating Restaurant, in operation for almost a quarter of a century and claiming to be the largest floating restaurant in the world. Simply take the bus to Aberdeen and then board one of the restaurant's own free shuttle boats, with departures every few minutes. Be sure to stop by the "Seafood Exhibition" on the lower deck, where you'll see tanks of live creatures swimming about. Many diners like to make their seafood selections here. As for the restaurant, it has more reds, golds, and dragon motifs than you've ever seen in one place. Dishes include everything from noodles and rice combinations to fresh lobster, scallops, garoupa balls, and fresh seafood (prawns are a particular favorite). Dim sum is

available from an English menu (from trolleys on Sun and holidays) until 4pm — certainly the least expensive way to enjoy the floating restaurant experience.

Aberdeen Harbour, Hong Kong Island. ✆ **852/2553 9111.** Main dishes HK$80–HK$400 (US$10–US$52); dim sum HK$14–HK$28 (US$1.80–US$3.65). Table charge HK$8 (US$1.05) per person. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–11pm; Sun 7am–11pm. Bus: 7 or 70 from Central to Aberdeen, then the restaurant's private boat.

5 Exploring Hong Kong

Most people think of Hong Kong as, primarily, an exotic shopping destination. In the past decade, however, Hong Kong has revved up its sightseeing potential, opening new city parks and revamping older ones, constructing community art centers, expanding museums or developing new ones, and redesigning organized sightseeing tours to reflect the territory's changing demographics. Although a few attractions have closed since the handover, new ones are in the works. On the other hand, if all you want to do is hike or lie on the beach, you can do that, too.

According to the Hong Kong Tourist Board, North Americans spend an average of 3.3 nights in Hong Kong. Although a week's stay would be better if you really want to do Hong Kong justice, you can see quite a bit of the city, and its outlying islands, in 3 to 5 days, especially if you're on the go from dawn until past dusk, since the city is so compact and its transportation is so efficient.

Although the SAR is compact and easy to navigate, it makes sense to divide the city into sections when planning your sightseeing. The information on museums, parks, markets, and other attractions, therefore, is subdivided in this chapter according to area, making it easier to coordinate sightseeing and dining plans.

1 Hong Kong's Top Attractions

The four activities I would recommend to every visitor to the SAR are: Ride the Star Ferry across the harbor; take the Peak tram to the top of Victoria Peak; ride one of the rickety old trams on Hong Kong Island; and, if you have the time, take a ferry to one of the outlying islands. Nothing can beat the thrill of these four experiences, or give you a better insight into the essence of Hong Kong and its people. What's more, they're all incredibly inexpensive.

THE STAR FERRIES

The stars of the Hong Kong show, of course, are the Star Ferries, green-and-white vessels that have been carrying passengers back and forth between Kowloon and Hong Kong Island since 1898. At only

HK$1.70 (US22¢) for the regular, lower-deck fare, it's one of the cheapest — and yet most dramatic — 5-minute rides in the world. The entire trip from loading pier to unloading pier takes about 7 minutes in all; there are approximately 400 crossings a day. (For tips on using the Star Ferry, see "Getting Around," in chapter 2.)

For longer boat rides, see the "Boat Tours" section later in this chapter.

VICTORIA PEAK

At 392m (1,308 ft.), Victoria Peak is Hong Kong Island's tallest hill, which, obviously, lends itself to offer spectacular views of the city and surrounding areas (if possible, go on a crystal-clear day). It's always been one of Hong Kong's most exclusive places to live, since, in addition to the views, the peak is typically cooler than the sweltering city below. (Even just a one-bedroom apartment on The Peak goes for a purported HK$50,000/US$6,500 a month!) More than a century ago, the rich reached the peak after a 3-hour trip in sedan chairs, transported to the top by coolies. Then, in 1888, the **Peak tram** began operations, cutting the journey from a grueling 3 hours to a mere 8 minutes. In 1989, the older, cast-iron green funicular cars with mahogany seats were replaced by new, modern cars imported from Switzerland, which increased the passenger load from 72 to 120 people.

The easiest way to reach the Peak Tram Station, located on Garden Road, is to take the no. 15C open-top shuttle bus that operates between the tram terminal and the Star Ferry in Central. (After you exit from the Star Ferry, turn left; shuttle buses depart from a traffic island located between the parking garage and City Hall.) Shuttle buses cost HK$3.20 (US40¢) and run every 10 to 20 minutes between 10am and 11:45pm. Otherwise, it's about a 10-minute walk to Garden Road and the tram station. Alternatively, you can take Minibus no. 15 from in front of the Star Ferry in Central directly to the top of Victoria Peak, but then you'd miss the tram unless you opt to take it down.

Tips The Best Peek of The Peak

For the best view when riding the Peak tram up to Victoria Peak, try to get a seat at the front, on the right side of the tram.

As for the trams, they depart every 15 minutes between 7am and midnight. The tram climbs almost vertically for 8 minutes before reaching the top of the peak — don't worry, there's never been an accident in its entire 100-odd years of operation. One-way tickets for the Peak tram cost HK$20 (US$2.60) for adults, HK$7 (US90¢) for seniors, and HK$5 (US65¢) for children. Round-trip tickets cost HK$30 (US$3.90), HK$14 (US$1.80), and HK$9 (US$1.15), respectively. Upon reaching The Peak, you'll find yourself at the very modern **Peak Tower,** designed by British architect Terry Farrell, which looks like a Chinese cooking wok. Head straight for the viewing terrace on Level 5, where you'll be privileged to one of the world's most breathtaking views, with the skyscrapers of Central, the boats plying Victoria Harbour, Kowloon, and the many hills of the New Territories undulating in the background.

Of the three attractions located in Peak Tower, the most well known around the world is probably **Madame Tussaud's,** Level 2, Peak Tower, 128 Peak Rd., Victoria Peak (✆ **852/3128 8288;** www.madame-tussauds.com.hk), with more than 100 life-size wax figures of celebrities, politicians, and historical figures. In addition to the usual figures — Marilyn Monroe, the Beatles, Winston Churchill, victims in a medieval torture chamber — there are also local heroes like Jackie Chan, Michelle Yeoh, and Bruce Lee. Be sure to bring your camera. It's open daily from 11am to 8pm and costs HK$75 (US$9.75) for adults and HK$50 (US$6.50) for seniors and children. You'll probably spend about 30 minutes here.

Another well-known attraction is **Ripley's Believe It or Not! Odditorium,** located on Level 3 of the Peak Tower (✆ **852/2849 0698;** www.thepeak.com.hk/tower/ripleys.html). The 26th Ripley's museum to open worldwide, it contains oddities (and replicas of oddities) collected by Robert L. Ripley on visits to 198 countries over 55 years, including a shrunken head from Ecuador, torture items from around the world, a two-headed calf, and models of the world's tallest and fattest men. Be forewarned that some of the items are purely grotesque, or, at best, out of date in a more socially correct world. Still, human nature being what it is, probably everyone wants to visit one of these museums at least once, and children, of course, are fascinated. You probably won't be able to tear them away in less than an hour. It's open daily from 9am to 10pm and costs HK$75 (US$9.75) for adults and HK$50 (US$6.50) for seniors and children.

Peak Explorer, Level 4 of the Peak Tower (✆ **852/2849 0866;** www.thepeak.com.hk/tower/explorer.html), is a 36-seat motion-simulator theater that features changing, 8-minute fast-paced films

and seats that move, jerk, roll, and rock in accordance to the action on the screen. It's almost like being onboard the roller coaster, racecar, motorbike, or whatever is being shown, and is definitely not for those with motion sickness. Admission here is HK$45 (US$5.85) for adults and HK$32 (US$4.15) for children. It's open Monday to Friday from noon to 10pm and Saturday and Sunday from 9am to 10pm.

If you wish, you can buy a ticket for all three attractions, which costs HK$130 (US$17) for adults and HK$92 (US$12) for seniors and children. Frankly, I consider your time in Hong Kong better spent elsewhere (since you can find these attractions in many other places throughout the world), though if you have older children in tow, you may not have a choice.

When you're finished in Peak Tower, exit it via Level 4. Across the street is the **Peak Galleria,** a three-story complex with shops, restaurants, a children's playground, and a viewing terrace.

But the best thing to do atop Victoria Peak, in my opinion, is to take a walk. One of my favorite walks in all of Hong Kong is the hour-long circular hike on Lugard Road and Harlech Road, both located just a stone's throw from the Peak tram terminus. Mainly a footpath overhung with banyan trees and passing lush vegetation, it snakes along the side of the cliff, offering great views of the Central District below, the harbor, Kowloon, and then Aberdeen and the outlying islands on the other side. You will also pass Victoria Peak mansions. This is one of the best walks in Hong Kong; at night, the lighted path offers one of the world's most romantic views. Don't miss it.

RIDING A TRAM

Just as the Star Ferry is the best way to see the harbor, the tram is the most colorful and cheapest way to see the northern end of Hong Kong Island, including the Central District, Western District, Wan Chai, and Causeway Bay. In fact, the tram is so much a part of Hong Kong life that it was chosen for Hong Kong's exhibit at the Vancouver '86 Expo. Dating from 1904, the tramline follows what used to be the waterfront (before the days of land reclamation). Old, narrow, double-decker affairs, the trams cut through the heart of the city, from Kennedy Town in the west to Shau Kei Wan in the east. There's only one detour — off to Happy Valley — so it's impossible to get lost.

In any case, if you're in Central, you can board the tram on Des Voeux Road Central. Climb to the upper deck and try to get a seat in the front row. (For more information on the fare and how to ride the tram, see "Getting Around," in chapter 2.) I especially like to

ride the tram at night, when neon signs are ablaze and the outdoor markets of Causeway Bay are in full swing.

2 Museums & Galleries

If you plan to visit all five of Hong Kong's main museums — the Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong Museum of History, Hong Kong Space Museum, Hong Kong Science Museum, and Hong Kong Heritage Museum (located in Sha Tin in the New Territories) — you can save money by purchasing the Museum Pass for HK$30 (US$3.90), which is valid for 1 week. The total price of purchasing single tickets to all five museums is HK$65 (US$8.45). You can purchase the pass at any of the Hong Kong Tourist Board Visitor Information and Services Centres. Note that museum admissions are free on Wednesdays.

Keep in mind, too, that municipal museums are closed December 25 and 26, January 1, and the first 3 days of the Chinese New Year. Private museums are usually also closed on bank holidays.

IN KOWLOON

Hong Kong Museum of Art ★★★ Because of its location on the Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront, just a 2-minute walk from the Star Ferry terminus, this museum is the most convenient and most worthwhile if your time is limited. I like popping in occasionally just to see the temporary exhibits, though it also boasts a vast collection of Chinese antiquities and fine art that make this one of my top picks in Hong Kong. Feast your eyes on ceramics, bronzes, jade, cloisonné, lacquerware, bamboo carvings, women's costumes, and textiles, as well as paintings, wall hangings, scrolls, and calligraphy dating from the 16th century to the present. The works are arranged in five permanent galleries on three floors of exhibit space, plus two galleries devoted to changing exhibits. The Historical Pictures Gallery is especially insightful, with 1,000 works in oils, watercolors, pencil drawings, and prints that provide a visual account of life in Hong Kong, Macau, and Guangzhou (Canton) in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Another gallery displays contemporary Hong Kong works by local artists. You'll want to spend at least an hour here, though art aficionados may want to devote more time by renting audio guides for HK$10 (US$1.30). A bonus is the beautiful backdrop of Victoria Harbour.

Hong Kong Cultural Centre Complex, 10 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2721 0116.** www.lcsd.gov.hk/hkma/. Admission HK$10 (US$1.30) adults; HK$5 (US65¢) children, students, and seniors. Free admission Wed. Fri–Wed 10am–6pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Hong Kong Museum of History ★★★ If you visit only one museum in Hong Kong, this should be it. Make it one of your first priorities, so you'll have a better understanding of what you see

during the rest of your trip. Opened in 2001, this is Hong Kong's ambitious attempt to chronicle its long and fascinating history, starting with the formation of its natural history and its beginnings as a Neolithic settlement and continuing through its development as a fishing village and subsequent transformation into a modern metropolis. Through displays that include dioramas, replicas of fishing boats, models, reconstructed traditional housing, furniture, clothing, and items from daily life, the museum introduces Hong Kong's ethnic groups and their traditional means of livelihood, customs, and beliefs. These include the Tanka, who lived their entire lives on boats, the Five Great Clans who settled in what is now the New Territories and built walled communities, and the Hakka, primarily rice farmers.

You can peer inside a fishing junk, see what Kowloon Walled City looked like before it became a park, see the backstage of a Chinese opera, read about the arrival of European traders and the Opium Wars, study a map showing land reclamation since the 1840s, and see how Hong Kong changed under Japanese occupation (surprisingly, the section on Japanese occupation is quite extensive, considering that it takes up less than 4 years of Hong Kong's history). There are small movie theaters spread throughout, though showings in English are limited. One of my favorite parts of the museum is a re-created street of old Hong Kong, complete with a Chinese herbal-medicine shop actually located in Central until 1980, and reconstructed here. There are also 19th- and early-20th-century photographs, poignantly showing how much Hong Kong has changed through the decades. You can easily spend 2 hours here.

100 Chatham Rd. S., Tsim Sha Tsui East. ✆ **852/2724 9042.** www.lcsd.gov.hk/hkmh/. Admission HK$10 (US$1.30) adults, HK$5 (US65¢) children and seniors. Free admission Wed. Wed–Mon 10am–6pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui (a 20-min. walk from exit B2). Bus: 5 from the Star Ferry bus terminus.

Hong Kong Science Museum ★★ *Kids* The mysteries of science and technology come to life here, with plenty of hands-on exhibits sure to appeal to children and adults alike. More than 500 exhibits cover four floors, with sections devoted to the life sciences; light, sound, and motion; meteorology and geography; electricity and magnetism; computers and robotics; construction; transportation and communication; occupational safety and health; energy efficiency; and food science and home technology. There is also an area specially designed for children 3 to 7. Visitors can play with different optical illusions, enter a rotating room to learn physics in a noninertial frame, "freeze" their shadows on a wall, pick up remote

voices with a large parabolic disc, play with bubbles, navigate a flight over Hong Kong Island or Kowloon at night, watch the mechanisms of an eight-cylinder gasoline engine, and learn about herbs used in traditional Chinese medicine. There are exhibits designed to test a visitor's fitness, such as lung capacity, endurance, and blood pressure. There are more than 30 personal computers in the computer section, where guests can learn about computer software, including word processing for children and graphics production, and surf the Internet for free (unfortunately, only 2 computers are for the Internet). This is a great place to bring kids on a rainy or humid day. You'll want to spend about 3 hours here.

2 Science Museum Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East. ✆ **852/2732 3232.** www.lcsd.gov.hk/hkscm/. Admission HK$25 (US$3.25) adults, HK$13 (US$1.60) children, students, and seniors. Free admission Wed. Mon–Wed and Fri 1–9pm, Sat–Sun and holidays 10am–9pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui (a 20-min. walk from exit B2). Bus: 5 from the Star Ferry bus terminus.

Hong Kong Space Museum *Kids* Located in front of The Peninsula hotel on the Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront, the Space Museum is easy to spot with its white-domed planetarium. It's divided into two parts: the Exhibition Halls with its Hall of Space Science and the Hall of Astronomy; and the Space Theatre. The Hall of Space Science explores the human journey into space, with exhibits on ancient astronomical history, science fiction, early rockets, manned space flights, and future space programs. There are also several interactive rides and exhibits (most with weight and height restrictions), including a ride on a virtual paraglider, a harness that holds occupants aloft with the same approximate gravity they'd experience walking on the moon, and a multi-axis chair developed for astronaut training that gives the sensation of tumbling through space. The Hall of Astronomy presents information on the solar system, solar science, the stars, and the universe. Personally, I find the museum, which opened in 1980, rather dated. Come only if you have kids and extra time on your hands, in which case you'll spend about an hour here.

The Space Theatre, one of the largest planetariums in the world, with a 23m (75-ft.) domed roof, presents mostly OMNIMAX screenings with a projection system that produces an almost 360° panorama, and sky shows with a Zeiss star projector that can project up to about 9,000 stars. Forty-minute to hour-long shows, ranging from such wonders of the world as the Great Barrier Reef to celestial phenomena like the Milky Way, are presented several times daily. Only a few are narrated in English, but for the others, free

Fun Fact **Did You Know?**

Hong Kong boasts several of the world's longest escalators. The world's two longest covered outdoor escalator systems are the four-section, 221m (738-ft.) system at Ocean Park and the 780m (2,600-ft.) Central/Mid-Levels escalator connecting Central to the Mid-Levels with a capacity of handling 210,600 passengers a day. The Hongkong Bank headquarters in Central boasts the two longest freely supported (no supporting walls along their lengths) escalators in the world.

headsets are available with simultaneous English translations. Try to buy your ticket at least a day in advance, either at the museum or any URBTIX outlet. Call ✆ **852/2734 2722** for show schedules in English.

Hong Kong Cultural Centre Complex, 10 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2721 0226.** www.lcsd.gov.hk/hkspm/. Admission to Exhibition Halls HK$10 (US$1.30) adults, HK$5 (US65¢) children, students, and seniors. Free admission on Wed. Space Theatre HK$24–HK$60 (US$3.10–US$7.80) adults, HK$12–HK$30 (US$1.55–US$3.90) children, students, and seniors. Mon and Wed–Fri 1–9pm, Sat–Sun and holidays 10am–9pm. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

ON HONG KONG ISLAND

Flagstaff House Museum of Tea Ware ★★ *Finds* Flagstaff House, located in Hong Kong Park, is the oldest colonial building in Hong Kong — the best place to go if you want to see typical Hong Kong architecture of 150 years ago. The house was completed in 1846 in Greek Revival style for the commander of the British forces. Now a museum devoted to the subject of tea culture in China, its collection includes about 500 pieces of tea ware ranging from earthenware to porcelain, primarily of Chinese origin, dating from the 7th century to the present day. With explanations in both English and Chinese, the exhibits also describe methods of making the various kinds of tea favored by the major dynasties. Don't miss the museum shop, which sells beautifully crafted teapots as well as teas. You can see everything here in less than an hour.

Hong Kong Park, 10 Cotton Tree Dr., Central. ✆ **852/2869 0690.** www.lcsd.gov.hk/hkma/. Free admission. Wed–Mon 10am–5pm. MTR: Admiralty (exit F); then follow the signs through Pacific Place to Island Shangri-La Hotel/Hong Kong Park via 2 escalators.

Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence Located in Lei Yue Mun Fort, one of Hong Kong's oldest and best-preserved British

coastal fortresses, dating from the Victorian period, this museum explores 600 years of the territory's coastal defense. Exhibits begin with the Ming and Qing dynasties, when coastal defenses guarded

southern China against the invasion of pirates and Western imperialists, and continue through the Opium Wars, Hong Kong's role as a major base for the British navy, the Japanese 1941 invasion, and the recent handover to the People's Liberation Army. The fort itself, built in 1887 to defend the eastern approaches to the harbor against possible attacks by Russia or France, retains its batteries, underground magazines, protective ditch, caponiers, and torpedo station. With its strategic location on the coast, it provides a panoramic view of the eastern approach to Victoria Harbour. You'll probably spend an hour here.

175 Tung Hei Rd., Shau Kei Wan. ✆ **852/2569 1500.** www.lcsd.gov.hk/hkmcd/. Admission HK$10 (US$1.30) adults; HK$5 (US65¢) students, seniors, and children. Free admission Wed. Fri–Wed 10am–5pm. MTR: Shau Kei Wan (exit B2, then a 15-min. walk).

Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences ★ *Finds* This museum charts the historical development of medical science in Hong Kong. It's located in the century-old, Edwardian-style former Pathological Institute, which was founded to combat the colony's most horrific outbreak of bubonic plague. Back then, British patients were treated upstairs, while the Chinese were relegated to the basement rooms. Several rooms remain almost exactly as they were, including an autopsy room and a laboratory filled with old equipment, while others serve as exhibition rooms devoted to such areas as the development of dentistry and radiology (note the X-ray of the bound foot). But what makes the museum particularly fascinating is its unique comparison of traditional Chinese and Western medicine, and its funding of research into Chinese medicine. Included are displays on acupuncture and traditional Chinese herbs. Depending on your interest, you can spend up to an hour here.

2 Caine Lane, Mid-Levels. ✆ **852/2549 5123.** www.hkmms.org.hk/. Admission HK$10 (US$1.30) adults, HK$5 (US65¢) children and seniors. Tues–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun and holidays 1–5pm. MTR: Central; then bus no. 26 from Des Voeux Rd. in front of Hongkong Bank headquarters to Man Mo Temple; walk up Ladder St. to Caine Lane.

Hong Kong Heritage Museum ★★ This museum (in Tai Wai, part of the New Territories), opened in 2001, presents both the history and culture of the New Territories in a series of themed exhibitions. Foremost is the New Territories Heritage Hall, with displays relating to the customs, religions, and lifestyle of the early fishermen and settlers and how they have changed over the centuries. A barge loaded for market, an ancestral hall, traditional clothing, and other items are also on display. Particularly stunning are the models

showing the growth of Sha Tin since the 1930s. I also like the Cantonese Opera Heritage Hall, a must for anyone wishing to gain insight into the history and characteristics of this unique form of entertainment, with musical instruments, elaborate costumes and headgear, and a typical backstage scene. The Chao Shao-an Gallery shows the works of Chao Shao-an (1905–98), a Hong Kong artist famous for his bird-and-flower paintings, while the T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art contains porcelains, bronzes, furniture, jade, and other works of Chinese art dating from the Neolithic period to the 20th century. For the kids, there's also a toy museum and the hands-on Children's Discovery Gallery, where they can practice being an archaeologist, wear traditional costumes, and learn about marshes. Allow at least 2 hours here.

1 Man Lam Road, Sha Tin. New Territories. ✆ **852/2180 8188.** Admission HK$10 (US$1.30) for adults, HK$5 (US65¢) for children, students, and seniors. Free on Wednesdays. Mon and Wed–Sat 10am–6pm, Sun and holidays 10am–7pm. KCR Railway: Halfway between Tai Wai and Sha Tin stations, about a 10-minute walk from each.

3 Temples

For more information on temples in the SAR, including those listed below, contact the Hong Kong Tourist Board at ✆ **852/2508 1234.** For information on Po Lin Monastery and its adjacent Giant Tian Tan Buddha, see the section on Lantau island later in this chapter.

Man Mo Temple ★ Hong Kong Island's oldest and most important temple was built in the 1840s and is named after its two principal deities: Man, the god of literature, who is dressed in red and holds a calligraphy brush; and Mo, the god of war, wearing a green robe and holding a sword. Ironically, Mo finds patronage in both the police force (shrines in his honor can be found in all Hong Kong police stations today) and the infamous triad secret societies. Two ornately carved sedan chairs in the temple were once used during festivals to carry the statues of the gods around the neighborhood. But what makes the temple particularly memorable are the giant incense coils hanging from the ceiling, imparting a fragrant, smoky haze — these are purchased by patrons seeking fulfillment of their wishes, such as good health or a successful business deal, and may burn as long as 3 weeks.

Hollywood Rd. and Ladder St., Western District. ✆ **852/2803 2916.** Free admission. Daily 8am–6pm. Bus: no. 26 from Des Voeux Rd. Central (in front of the Hongkong Bank headquarters) to the 2nd stop on Hollywood Rd., across from the temple.

Life on the Water in Aberdeen

Situated on the south side of Hong Kong Island, Aberdeen is nestled around a naturally protected harbor. Famous for its colorful floating seafood restaurant and boat people who live on junks in Aberdeen Harbour, the town has undergone massive changes in recent years. Originally a typhoon shelter and land base for seafarers, it used to be a charming fishing village and boat-building port, supported primarily by several thousand junks and boat people. Many of the boat people, however, have since been moved to massive housing projects, and the waterfront surrounding Aberdeen is now crowded with high-rises. At anchor are almost as many yachts as fishing boats and junks.

Still, Aberdeen continues to be popular with the tourist crowd because of its remaining boat population and floating restaurant. Women operating sampans will vie for your dollars to tour you around the harbor, which is definitely worth the price since it's about the only thing to do here and is the best way to see the junks. Although the boat population is shrinking, you'll pass huge boats that house extended families; you'll see men repairing fishing nets, women hanging out their laundry, dogs barking, children playing, and families eating. I find the ride rather voyeuristic but fascinating just the same. There was a time when a boat person could be born, live, marry, and die onboard, hardly ever setting foot on shore. Nowadays, however,

Wong Tai Sin ★★ Located six subway stops northeast of Yau Ma Tei in the far north end of Kowloon Peninsula, Wong Tai Sin is Hong Kong's most popular Taoist temple. Although the temple itself dates only from 1973, it adheres to traditional Chinese architectural principles with its red pillars, two-tiered golden roof, blue friezes, yellow latticework, and multicolored carvings. The temple is very popular; everyone who comes here is seeking information about their fortunes — from advice about business or horse racing to determining which day is most auspicious for a wedding. Most worshippers make use of a bamboo container holding numbered sticks. After lighting a joss stick and kneeling before the main altar, the worshipper gently shakes the container until one of the sticks

young people are moving on shore to seek more stable employment.

A 20-minute tour from a licensed operator will cost approximately HK$60 (US$7.80) per person and is offered daily between 9am and 5:30pm from the Aberdeen Centre promenade. There are also old women with wide-brimmed straw hats who will try to persuade you to board their sampan, with the price open to bargaining and depending on the numbers of tourists around at the time. On one particularly slow day, for example, I was offered, and took, a sampan tour for HK$50 (US$6.50), and I was the only one in the boat.

Other Aberdeen attractions include the largest floating restaurant in the world — the Jumbo Floating Restaurant (p. 104), which offers free shuttle service from the Aberdeen Centre promenade — and a temple built in 1851. The temple is dedicated to Tin Hau, protectress of fishing folk, and is located at the junction of Aberdeen Main Road and Aberdeen Reservoir Road. Nearby is the huge Ocean Park amusement park with its thrill rides and aquarium.

To get to Aberdeen, take bus no. 7 from Central ferry pier no. 7; bus no. 70 from the Exchange Square Bus Terminal in the Central District; or bus no. 72 from Causeway Bay. For Ocean Park, take the special Ocean Park Citybus from either the Admiralty MTR station or from in front of the Star Ferry pier in Central.

falls out. The number corresponds to a certain fortune, which is then interpreted by a soothsayer at the temple.

You can wander around the temple grounds, where there are halls dedicated to the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy and to Confucius; the Nine Dragon Garden, a Chinese garden with a pond, waterfall, and a replica of the famous Nine Dragons mural (the original is in Beijing's Imperial Palace); the Good Wish Garden, a replica of the Yi He Garden in Beijing with circular, square, octagonal, and fan-shaped pavilions, ponds, an artificial waterfall, and rocks and concrete fashioned to resemble animals; and a clinic with both Western medical services and traditional Chinese herbal treatments. Wong Tai Sin takes its name, in fact, from a legendary shepherd who

learned the art of healing. A visit to this temple, surrounded by vast, government housing estates, provides insight into Chinese religious practices and is well worth a stop despite its out-of-the-way location.

Wong Tai Sin Estate. Free admission to temple, though donations of about HK$1 (US15¢) are expected at the temple's entrance and for Nine Dragon Wall Garden; admission to Good Wish Garden HK$2 (US25¢) extra. Temple open daily 7am–5:30pm; gardens open Tues–Sun 9am–4pm. MTR: Wong Tai Sin (exit B2) and then a 3-min. walk (follow the signs).

4 Parks & Gardens

IN KOWLOON

KOWLOON PARK *Kids* Occupying the site of an old military encampment first established in the 1860s, Kowloon Park is Tsim Sha Tsui's largest recreational and sports facility, boasting an indoor heated Olympic-size swimming pool, three outdoor leisure pools linked by a series of waterfalls, an open-air sculpture garden featuring works by local and overseas sculptors, a Chinese garden, a fitness trail, an aviary, a maze formed by hedges, a children's playground, and a bird lake with flamingos and other waterfowl. Not far from the Tsim Sha Tsui MTR station (take the A1 exit for Kowloon Park), it's easily accessible from Nathan, Haiphong, and Austin roads and is open daily from 6am to midnight, with free admission. The swimming pools (✆ **852/2724 4522**) are open daily from 6:30am to 9pm and charge HK$19 (US$2.45) for adults and HK$9 (US$1.15) for children.

KOWLOON WALLED CITY PARK ★★ *Finds* Hong Kong's newest park is perhaps its finest. Although it doesn't boast the attractions of the city's other parks, the Kowloon Walled City Park, on Tung Tau Tsuen Road, was designed to re-create the style of a classical Southern Chinese garden, and is the largest such garden outside China. Beautifully landscaped with man-made hills, ponds, streams, pines, boulders, bonsai, bamboo, and shrubs, it features winding paths through a sculpture garden, flower gardens, pavilions, and a playground.

Even more fascinating is the site's history, described through photographs in a former administration office. More than 150 years ago, the site was on the seashore, making it perfect in 1847 for the construction of a Chinese fort to defend Kowloon after the British takeover of Hong Kong Island. After 1898, when the British took over the New Territories, the 500 soldiers occupying the fort were expelled. But China did not consider the site part of the leased

territories, and for most of the next century, the Kowloon Walled City remained in sovereign limbo, ignored by British authorities. It developed a lifestyle of its own, with its own set of laws. An enclave of tenements and secret societies that flouted Hong Kong's building regulations and health standards, it served as a haven for squatters, refugees, criminals, prostitutes, and drug addicts. Densely packed and infested with rats, many parts of the warrenlike slum never saw the light of day. Hong Kong police ventured inside only in pairs. Following a special Sino-British agreement and years of lengthy negotiations over new housing for Walled City residents, the enclave was demolished in 1994. A few historic structures remain, however, including the Old South Gate entrance, wall foundations, and flagstone paths. To reach the park, take the MTR to Lok Fu station and then walk 15 minutes on Junction Road to Tung Tau Tsuen Road; or take bus no. 1 from the Star Ferry in Tsim Sha Tsui to the stop opposite the park. It's open daily from 6:30am to 11:30pm, and admission is free.

YUEN PO STREET BIRD GARDEN ★★★ *Kids* While in Hong Kong, you may notice wooden birdcages hanging outside shops or from apartment balconies, or perhaps even see someone walking down the street with a cage. Birds are favorite pets in Chinese households, and the price of a bird is determined not by its plumage but by its singing talents. To see more of these prized songbirds, visit the fascinating Yuen Po Street Bird Garden, Prince Edward Road West, which consists of a series of Chinese-style moon gates and courtyards lined with stalls selling songbirds, beautifully crafted wood and bamboo cages, live crickets and mealy worms, and tiny porcelain food bowls. Nothing, it seems, is too expensive for these tiny creatures. The lane is also crowded with scores of people buying and selling birds, or perhaps just taking their birds for an outing. This garden is very Chinese and a lot of fun to see; young children love it. Incidentally, next door is Flower Market Road, lined with flower shops, while on nearby Tung Choi Street is the Goldfish Market with exotic fish. To reach the Bird Garden, open daily from 7am to 8pm, take the MTR to Prince Edward Road station (exit B1 or B2) and walk 10 minutes west on Prince Edward Road West, turning left at the railway onto Yuen Po Street. Free admission.

ON HONG KONG ISLAND

HONG KONG PARK ★★ *Kids* Opened in 1991, Hong Kong Park, Supreme Court Road and Cotton Tree Drive, Central, features

a dancing fountain at its entrance; Southeast Asia's largest greenhouse with more than 2,000 rare plant species, including desert and tropical jungle varieties; an aviary housing 800 exotic birds in a tropical rain-forest setting with an elevated walkway; various gardens; a children's playground; and a viewing platform reached by climbing 105 stairs. The most famous building on the park grounds is the Flagstaff House Museum of Tea Ware (p. 114). Since the marriage registry is located at the edge of the park, the gardens are a favorite place for wedding photographs, especially on weekends and auspicious days of the Chinese calendar. The park is open daily from 6:30am to 11pm, the greenhouse and aviary are open daily 9am to 5pm, and the Museum of Tea Ware is open Wednesday through Monday from 10am to 5pm. Free admission to all. To reach the park, take the MTR to Admiralty Station (exit F), then follow the signs through Pacific Place and up the set of escalators to Island Shangri-La Hotel and Hong Kong Park.

ZOOLOGICAL & BOTANICAL GARDENS ★ *Kids* Established in 1864, the Zoological and Botanical Gardens, Upper Albert Road, Central (www.lcsd.gov.hk/leisure/lp/hkzbg/), are spread on the slope of Victoria Peak, making it a popular respite for Hong Kong residents. Come here early, around 7am, and you'll see Chinese residents going through the slow motions of tai chi, a disciplined physical routine of more than 200 individual movements, designed to exercise every muscle of the body and bring a sense of peace and balance to its practitioners. In the gardens themselves, which retain some of their Victorian charm, flowers are almost always in bloom, from azaleas in the spring to wisteria and bauhinia in the summer and fall. More than 1,000 species of plants, most of them indigenous to tropical and subtropical regions and planted throughout the grounds, include Burmese rosewood trees, varieties of bamboo, Indian rubber trees, camphor trees, a variety of camellia, herbs, and the Hong Kong orchid. The small zoo houses 600 birds, 90 mammals, and 20 reptiles, including jaguars, orangutans, tamarins, kangaroos, flamingos, a Burmese python, Palawan peacocks, birds of paradise from Papua New Guinea, cranes, and Mandarin ducks. The zoo is well known for its success in breeding birds on the verge of extinction and for supplying zoos around the world with new stock.

If you're tired of Central and its traffic, this is a pleasant place to regain your perspective. There's also a children's playground. Free admission. The eastern part of the park, containing most of the

botanical gardens and the aviaries, is open daily from 6am to 10pm, while the western half, with its reptiles and mammals, is open daily from 6am to 7pm. To reach it, take the MTR to Central and then

walk 15 minutes up Garden Road to the corner of Upper Albert Road. Or take bus no. 3B or 12 from the Jardine House on Connaught Road Central.

5 An Amusement Park

Ocean Park ★★★ *Kids* If you're a kid or a kid at heart, you'll love Ocean Park, a combination marine park and amusement center. Situated along a dramatic rocky coastline on the island's southern shore, the park is divided into two areas: a "lowland" and a "headland," connected by cable car and escalator. Because of the wide range of attractions, Ocean Park is interesting for children and seniors alike, as well as everyone in between.

The lowland is subdivided into several areas and attractions. The most popular residents of Ocean Park are An An and Jia Jia, a pair of pandas presented as gifts from China. Aimed at youngsters are the Dinosaur Discovery Trail, with 17 lifelike models of dinosaurs (the tyrannosaurus may be too scary for toddlers), and Kids' World, with its kiddie rides, playgrounds, remote-control cars and boats, shows geared toward children, and shooting-games arcade. Educational tours are given at Dolphin University (only 1 tour a day in English, however), where the audience can watch the training of dolphins at close range. Film Fantasia is a 100-seat theater with hydraulically actuated seats that move in time to the fast-paced action on the screen, kind of like riding a roller coaster without actually going anywhere but visually much more stimulating (participants must be at least 1.2m/4 ft. tall). Much gentler are walks through the magical Butterfly House (shaped, interestingly enough, like a caterpillar) with hundreds of free-flying butterflies, and, my favorite, the Golden Pagoda set in a lush garden, with more varieties of goldfish than you ever imagined possible, most of them from China. The pompommed fish, for example, have large pompomlike growths on their heads, while the bubble eyes, with huge bubbles under their eyes, are too bizarre for words.

From the lowland, visitors board cable cars for a spectacular 8-minute ride over a hill to the headland, while being treated to great views of the coastline and the South China Sea along the way. The headland area, situated on a peninsula that juts into the sea, is also subdivided into several areas and attractions. Pacific Pier features an artificial wave cove that is home to sea lions, penguins, and a shark aquarium, with more than 200 sharks and rays representing more than 30 species, viewed from an underwater tunnel. Ocean Theatre

features shows by talented dolphins, sea lions, and a killer whale. But my favorite is the Atoll Reef, one of the world's largest aquariums, with 2,600 fish of 200 different species. The observation passageway circles the aquarium on four levels, enabling you to view the sea life — everything from giant octopi to schools of tropical fish — from various depths and from different angles. There are also thrill rides, including a Ferris wheel, a roller coaster that turns upside down three times, another roller coaster that follows a Wild West theme, and a rather wet ride on a "raging river." Other exhibits include a Japanese Garden; a 69m-high (230 ft.) Ocean Park Tower offering revolving, panoramic views of Aberdeen and outlying islands; and an aviary with more than 2,000 birds.

After touring the headland, you can take the long escalator down to the Tai Shue Wan Entrance, from which it's a short taxi ride to Aberdeen with its sampan rides and floating restaurant. At any rate, to do Ocean Park justice, plan on spending a minimum of 4 hours here.

Aberdeen, Hong Kong Island. ✆ **852/2552 0291.** www.oceanpark.com.hk. Admission HK$165 (US$21) adults, HK$85 (US$11) children. Daily 10am–6pm. Bus: Ocean Park Citybus 629 from the Admiralty MTR station or from the Central Star Ferry pier every 20 min.; you can buy round-trip tickets that include park admission. Or take no. 70 from Exchange Sq. in Central or no. 72 from Causeway Bay (get off at the 1st stop after the tunnel and then walk 20 min.).

6 Organized Tours & Cultural Activities

Hong Kong offers lots of organized tours, so if you're pressed for time, this may be the best way to go. Most major hotels have a tour desk where you can make bookings for city tours. In addition, I heartily recommend participating in one or more of the Hong Kong Tourist Board's Meet the People cultural activities, which are free, 1-hour tours or lectures given by local specialists covering everything from Chinese antiques to Hong Kong's contemporary-art scene.

CITY TOURS

For general sightseeing, the **Gray Line** offers a variety of tours, with bookings available through most Hong Kong hotels or by calling ✆ **852/2368 7111** or searching www.grayline.com.hk. The Deluxe Hong Kong Island Tour is a 5-hour trip offered both morning and afternoon and includes stops at Man Mo Temple, Victoria Peak, Aberdeen, and Stanley. It costs HK$290 (US$38) for adults and HK$190 (US$25) for children. Other tours take in the Po Lin Monastery on Lantau island and the New Territories; there are also sunset cruises (for information about organized evening tours, see

the "Only in Hong Kong" section of chapter 7, "Hong Kong After Dark," beginning on p. 170).

Splendid Tours & Travel (✆ **852/2316 2151;** www.splendidtours.com) also offers a general city tour, excursions to Lantau and the New Territories, night tours, and cruises, which can also be booked through Hong Kong hotels.

BOAT TOURS

Since so many of Hong Kong's attractions are on or near the water, a variety of boat tours are available, including those given by Gray Line and Splendid Tours & Travel (see above). **Watertours,** Hong Kong's largest tour operator of boat and junk cruises, also offers a 2-hour cruise that includes a trip to a typhoon shelter and its junks and the firing of the Noon Day Gun in Causeway Bay (a holdover from colonial days that you can see if you're there, but don't go out of your way to see it) by Jardine Matheson & Co., Hong Kong's oldest trading company. The cost of this tour, which departs at 10:15am from the Kowloon public pier and 10:30am from Queen's Pier in Central and includes a beer, soft drinks, coffee, or tea, is HK$220 (US$29) for adults and HK$130 (US$17) for children. Watertours also schedules more than a half dozen other longer boat trips, including a combination water-and-land tour and sunset and evening cruises aboard Chinese junks (for evening cruises, see chapter 7, "Hong Kong After Dark"). You can pick up a Watertours pamphlet at HKTB Visitor Information and Services Centres and in many hotels.

Otherwise, **Hong Kong Dolphinwatch** (✆ **852/2984 1414;** www.hkdolphinwatch.com) offers 4-hour trips four to six mornings a week that include a bus ride to the new satellite town of Tung Chung, followed by a luxury cruise to the natural habitat of the endangered Chinese white dolphins (Indo-Pacific Humpback dolphins), which live off Lantau island within sight of power plants, factories, Tung Chung, and the new airport. Advance booking is necessary, and the cost is HK$320 (US$42) for adults and HK$160 (US$21) for children.

HONG KONG TOURIST BOARD (HKTB) SPECIAL-INTEREST TOURS

These tours and cultural activities, all organized and offered by the Hong Kong Tourist Board, are highly recommended. "Meet the People" gives visitors the opportunity to meet local professionals and learn about lore through free 1-hour tours or seminars. The "Heritage Tour" would be very difficult, if not impossible, to do on

your own. The "Land Between" Tour and the "Come Horse Racing" Tour make life easier because they leave the driving to HKTB. You can book these tours through HKTB Visitor Information and Services Centres or by calling one of the HKTB booking hot lines below. You can also find info on these tours on HKTB's website, www.discoverhongkong.com.

"MEET THE PEOPLE" *Moments* Through this unique program of free 1-hour tours, lectures, and seminars, visitors can meet local specialists and gain in-depth knowledge of Hong Kong's traditions. Programs are often updated and revised; past offerings have included such subjects as Chinese antiques, the language and lore of tea, Hong Kong's contemporary art scene, traditional Chinese medicine, *fung shui* (geomancy), and tai chi (shadow boxing), with something going on virtually every day of the week. Reservations are not necessary. For details on what, when, and where, pick up a *Meet the People* brochure at a HKTB Visitor Information and Services Centre.

"LAND BETWEEN" TOUR This 6½-hour excursion, offered by HKTB, takes visitors through the vast New Territories via air-conditioned motor coach, enabling them to see how much this once-rural region has changed in the past couple decades, with traditional villages now overshadowed by huge government housing estates that house half of Hong Kong's population. Passing satellite towns with high-rise apartment buildings, farms, and villages, the bus stops at a temple, a lookout point on Hong Kong's tallest mountain, the traditional rural market at Luen Wo, a bird sanctuary, a fishing village to see how fisher folk breed fish in submerged cages, and a Cantonese restaurant for lunch. The price of this tour, with departures daily, is HK$385 (US$50) for adults, and HK$335 (US$44) for children under 16 and seniors 60 and over. To book, call The Land Between Tour Reservations Hotline at ✆ **852/2368 7112.**

HERITAGE TOUR This HKTB tour also takes in the New Territories, but its emphasis is on Hong Kong's past rather than the present and it makes stops at historic Chinese sites that even Hong Kong residents seldom see. It's a must for those who are interested in local historical architecture; it also gives insight into clan life in the New Territories long before the region became part of colonial Hong Kong. Not only does the tour visit scattered sites that would be impossible for the individual traveler to reach in 1 day (and in some cases even find), but the commentary provided by knowledgeable guides is much more informative than what you'd gain by visiting the sites on your own. Lasting approximately 5 hours, tours

make stops at the Tai Fu Tai, a Chinese-style ornate mansion built in 1865 by a high-ranking official and fascinating for its insight into how the rich lived; Tang Chung Ling, an ancestral hall belonging to one of the Five Great Clans; Lo Wai, a walled village built by the Tang clan; and the Man Mo Temple and a traditional street market in Tai Po with stalls selling fresh produce and dried seafood. Tours depart every Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday (except public holidays), and cost HK$290 (US$38) for adults and HK$240 (US$31) for children younger than 16 and seniors 60 and older. Call the Heritage Tour Reservation Hotline at ✆ **852/2368 7112** for more information.

"COME HORSE RACING" TOUR Yet another HKTB-sponsored tour, this one allows visitors to experience the excitement of the races, at either Happy Valley or Sha Tin, an excitement that grows proportionally according to how much you bet. Tours are only scheduled during the horse-racing season — September to mid-June — usually on Wednesday evenings and on Saturday and/or Sunday afternoons. Two types of tours are available: The Classic Tour, costing HK$490 (US$64), includes a pre-race Western-style buffet lunch or dinner, personal entry badge to the luxurious Visitors' Box in the Hong Kong Jockey Club's Members' Enclosure, transportation, guide services, and even hints to help you place your bets. The EZ Race Tour, costing HK$120 (US$16), includes transportation and admission to the Betting Lounge within the Members' Enclosure. Tours are limited to tourists 18 years of age and older (be sure to bring your passport with you when booking and participating in this tour). For bookings, call the Come Horse Racing Tour Reservations Hotline at ✆ **852/2366 3995.** More information on the horse races is presented in "Spectator Sports," below.

7 Outdoor Activities

Despite the fact that the SAR is densely populated, there's enough open space to pursue everything from golf to hiking to windsurfing. For the hardworking Chinese and expatriates, recreation and leisure are essential for relaxing and winding down. With that in mind, try to schedule your golfing, swimming, or hiking trips on weekdays unless you enjoy jostling elbows with the crowds.

TAI CHI

Tai chi (shadow boxing) is an ancient Chinese regimen designed to balance body and soul and thereby release energy from within. By

strengthening both the mind and the body through seemingly fluid, slow movements that mask the strength and control required to perform the balletlike exercise, tai chi fosters a sense of well-being and nurtures self-discipline. It also helps develop balance, improves muscle tone and breathing, and aids digestion. In Hong Kong, both young and old practitioners gather every morning in downtown parks and open public spaces to perform tai chi. Visitors, too, can join complimentary 1-hour **lessons** in English, offered by the Hong Kong Tourist Board's Meet the People cultural program, every Tuesday and Wednesday at 8am. Simply show up at the waterfront promenade outside the Hong Kong Cultural Centre on Tsim Sha Tsui near the Star Ferry, where you'll be led through the exercises by a tai chi master. Participants are advised to wear casual clothing and comfortable sport shoes with rubber soles. For more information, contact the **Hong Kong Tourist Board** (✆ **852/2508 1234**).

HIKING

With 23 country parks — amounting to more than 40% of Hong Kong's space — there are many trails of varying levels of difficulty throughout Hong Kong, including hiking trails, nature trails, and family trails. Serious hikers, for example, may want to consider the famous **MacLehose Trail** in the New Territories, which stretches about 97km (60 miles) through eight country parks, from the Sai Kung Peninsula in the east to Tuen Mun in the west. The **Lantau Trail** is a 69km (43-mile) circular trail on **Lantau island** that begins and ends at Mui Wo (also called Silvermine Bay), passing several popular scenic spots and campsites along the way and including a 2½-hour trek to the top of Lantau Peak. Both the MacLehose and Lantau Trails are divided into smaller sections of varying difficulty, which means that you can tailor your hike to suit your own abilities and time constraints. Easier to reach is the 50km (31-mile) Hong Kong Trail, which spans Hong Kong Island's five country parks. The Hong Kong Tourist Board has some trail maps, as well as a hiking and wildlife guide book called *Exploring Hong Kong Countryside: A Visitor's Companion.* Or, contact the Country and Marine Parks Authority at ✆ **852/2150 6666.**

JOGGING

The best places to jog on Hong Kong Island without dodging traffic are **Victoria Park's jogging track** in Causeway Bay, **Harlech Road** on Victoria Peak, and **Bowen Road,** which stretches from Stubbs Road to Magazine Gap Road in the Mid-Levels and offers great views over the harbor. In addition, an inside track at the

Fun Fact **Did You Know?**

Hong Kong won its first gold medal ever at the Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta in 1996 — in women's windsurfing.

Happy Valley racecourse is open for runners when the horses aren't using the field. On the other side of the harbor, there's **Kowloon Park,** as well as the waterfront promenade along Tsim Sha Tsui and Tsim Sha Tsui East.

Remember that it can be quite hot and humid during the summer months, so try to jog in the early morning or in the evening.

8 Spectator Sports

If you're here anytime from September to mid-June, join the rest of Hong Kong at the **horse races.** Horse racing started in Happy Valley more than 150 years ago, when British settlers introduced the sport, making the Happy Valley track the oldest racecourse in Asia outside China. There is also a newer, modern track in Sha Tin (the New Territories), which can accommodate 90,000 spectators.

Without a doubt, horse racing is by far the most popular sporting event in Hong Kong. It's not, perhaps, the sport itself that draws so much enthusiasm, but rather the fact that, aside from the local lottery, racing is the only legal form of gambling in Hong Kong. The Chinese love to gamble, and there are more than 100 off-course betting centers throughout Hong Kong. Winnings are tax-free.

Races are held Wednesday evenings and some Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Both tracks feature giant color screens that show close-ups of the race in progress, photographs of jockeys and trainers, and videos of previous races. It's fun and easy to get in on the betting action, and you don't have to bet much — the minimum wager of HK$10 (US$1.30) per race is enough.

The lowest admission price is HK$10 (US$1.30), which is for the general public and is standing-room only. If you want to watch from the more exclusive Hong Kong Jockey Club members' enclosure, are at least 18 years old, and are a bona-fide tourist, you can purchase a temporary member's badge for HK$50 (US$6.50). It's available upon showing your passport at either the Badge Enquiry Office at the main entrance to the members' private enclosure (at either track) or at the off-course betting center near the Star Ferry concourse in Central. Tickets are sold on a first-come, first-served basis.

To reach Happy Valley Racecourse, take the tram to Happy Valley or the MTR to Causeway Bay (take the Times Sq. exit and walk towards the Wong Nai Chung Rd.). To reach Sha Tin Racecourse, take the KCR railway to Racecourse Station.

If you don't want to go to the races but would still like to bet on the winning horses, you can place your bets at one of the off-course betting centers. There's a convenient one near the Star Ferry concourse in the Central District and another one at 2–4 Prat Ave. in Tsim Sha Tsui.

On the other hand, an easy way to see the races is to take an HKTB-sponsored tour to the tracks, described in "Organized Tours & Cultural Activities," earlier in this chapter. For information on current sporting events and future dates, contact the Hong Kong Tourist Board (✆ **852/2508 1234**).

9 Lantau

There are some 260 outlying islands around Hong Kong, most of them barren and uninhabited. Because construction in the New Territories is booming and transportation to underpopulated areas there can be slow, the islands offer the best opportunity to see something of rural Chinese life. What's more, they're easy to reach — hop on a ferry in Central and then sit back and enjoy the view. Taking a ferry to an outlying island is the cheapest harbor cruise there is, making getting there part of the fun.

Inhabited since Neolithic times and twice the size of Hong Kong Island, Lantau is Hong Kong's largest island. But while Hong Kong Island has a population of more than a million, **Lantau** ★★★ has only about 45,000. Much of Lantau remains mountainous and lush. Country parks make up more than half of the island, with 69km (43 miles) of marked hiking trails. Lantau is an island of high peaks, remote and isolated beaches, small villages, temples, and monasteries. But the main reason visitors come here is to see its Giant Tian Tan Buddha, the largest seated outdoor Buddha in the world, and to eat a vegetarian meal at the nearby Po Lin Monastery. Because of the ferry and bus rides required to get there and back, allow at least 5 hours for a visit to Lantau.

GETTING THERE

Ferries, with both ordinary and deluxe class, depart from outlying-ferry pier no. 7 in Central approximately every 2 hours or less between 6:10am and 10:30pm and arrive about 50 minutes later at

Silvermine Bay, known as Mui Wo in Chinese. (For these ferries, I recommend deluxe class, since this upper-deck ticket entitles you to sit on an open deck out back — a great place to sip coffee or soda when the weather is nice — and watch the harbor float past. In addition, deluxe cabins are the only ones that are air-conditioned, a plus when humidity is at its peak.) In addition, deluxe cabins are the only ones that are air-conditioned, a plus when humidity is at its peak.), depart from outlying-ferry pier no. 7 in Central approximately every 2 hours or less between 6:10am and 10:30pm and arrive about 50 minutes later at Silvermine Bay, known as Mui Wo in Chinese. Prices are HK$16.80 (US$2.20) for deluxe class and HK$10.50 (US$1.35) for ordinary, with slightly higher rates charged Sundays and holidays. There is also more frequent hoverferry service, which gets you there in about 40 minutes for HK$21 (US$2.70). In Mui Wo, there is a hotel fronting the bay as well as some restaurants, but otherwise, there isn't much of interest. As soon as you exit the ferry pier, you'll see a bus terminal with buses going to other parts of the island, with departures coinciding with the arrival of the ferries. For the Giant Buddha and Po Lin Monastery, take bus no. 2 bound for Ngong Ping (Po Lin Monastery). The exact bus fare of HK$16 (US$2.05) Monday to Saturday and HK$25 (US$3.25) on Sunday and public holidays is required, so come with lots of change. The bus hurtles around hair-raising curves and up and down through lush countryside — not for the faint of heart. The duration of the ride from Silvermine Bay to Po Lin Monastery takes about 45 minutes.

If you don't wish to ride the ferry, you can also reach Lantau by taking the Tung Chung MTR Line, which was extended to Lantau to serve staff working and living near the new airport. It takes about 45 minutes to ride from Hong Kong Station in Central to Tung Chung, the end terminus. In Tung Chung, bus no. 23 reaches Ngong Ping in about 50 minutes and the ride is no less hair-raising. On Saturday afternoon and Sunday, there is additional infrequent ferry service from Tsim Sha Tsui's Star Ferry concourse to Lantau and Cheung Chau, but it may not offer deluxe class.

For the most up-to-date information on ferry schedules and prices, drop by the Hong Kong Tourist Board for a free copy of timetables and prices.

EXPLORING LANTAU

The most famous attractions on Lantau are the **Giant Tian Tan Buddha** and **Po Lin Monastery,** both situated on the plateau of

Ngong Ping at an elevation of 738m (2,460 ft.). The Buddha is so huge that you'll have your first glimpses of it en route on the bus. More than 30m (100 ft.) tall and weighing 250 tons, it's the world's largest seated outdoor bronze Buddha and can be seen as far away as Macau (or so it is claimed) on clear days. There are 260-some steps leading up to the Buddha itself, but first you should stop at the ticket office at the bottom of the steps to purchase a meal ticket, since the other reason people come to Po Lin is to eat. The monastery is famous for its vegetarian lunches, served in a big dining hall (see "Where to Dine," below). Your meal ticket, which specifies the time for your communal meal, doubles as your admission ticket to a small museum inside the base of the statue, but there isn't much to see here. Rather, the best part is the view of the surrounding countryside from the statue's platform, which is free. The Giant Buddha is open daily from 10am to 6pm.

From the statue, walk a couple minutes to the colorful Po Lin Monastery, largest and best known of the dozens of Buddhist monasteries on Lantau. Po Lin (which means "precious lotus") was first established more than 100 years ago by reclusive monks; the present buildings date from 1921 and 1970. The ornate main temple houses three magnificent bronze statues of Buddha, representing the past, present, and future; it also has a brightly painted vermilion interior with dragons and other Chinese mythical figures on the ceiling. You'll probably want to spend about a half hour wandering through the grounds here. If you're truly adventurous or energetic, you can climb to the top of nearby Lantau Peak, the second-tallest peak in Hong Kong (1,000m/3,000 ft.); plan on 3 hours for the hike up and back.

From Po Lin, you can reboard the bus that will take you back to Mui Wo (Silvermine Bay) or Tung Chung, with departures once or twice an hour (I always check departure times upon arrival at Po Lin, so I don't have to sit around after a just-missed bus).

WHERE TO DINE

Mui Wo Cooked Food Market VARIED This covered, open-air pavilion of food stalls (*dai pai dongs*) offers inexpensive dishes, such as noodles, vegetables, sandwiches, rice dishes, and fresh seafood. Fresh fish, kept alive in tanks in front of each stall, costs about HK$150 (US$20). This is a good place to wait for the next ferry. If you want, just order a can of beer and sit at a table next to the water.

Chung Hau Rd., Silvermine Bay. Most menu items HK$20–HK$100 (US$2.60–US$13). No credit cards. Daily 10am–9pm. Take a right from the ferry dock; the market is to your right, a minute's walk away.

Po Lin Monastery ✪✪ VEGETARIAN Po Lin Monastery, offering fixed-price vegetarian meals, is the most famous place to eat on the island. Buy your lunch ticket from the counter at the base of the Giant Buddha or at the monastery itself; your ticket is for a specific time, at an assigned table. Two different meals of soup, vegetarian dishes, and rice are available: the ordinary, HK$60 (US$7.80) meal is served in an unadorned dining hall and the procedure is rather unceremonious, with huge dishes of vegetables, rice, and soup brought to communal tables covered with plastic tablecloths. Grab a Styrofoam bowl and chopsticks and help yourself. Packed with Chinese families, the dining hall here is certainly colorful. The HK$100 (US$13) "Deluxe" meal, is served in an adjacent "VIP Room" and is popular mostly with foreign visitors. Meals here are served on china plates, and the food is a notch above the cheaper meal. Both, however, are good. There's also a snack menu offered for around HK$30 (US$3.90) available at an open-air counter at the monastery; it consists of fried noodles and bean curd; skip it.

Ngong Ping. ✆ **852/2985 5248.** Fixed-price lunch HK$60 or HK$100 (US$7.80 or US$13). No credit cards. Daily 11:30am–4pm.

6 Shopping

No doubt about it — one of the main reasons people come to Hong Kong is to shop. According to the Hong Kong Tourist Board (HKTB), visitors here spend more than 50% of their money on shopping. In fact, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) is such a popular shopping destination that many luxury cruise ships dock longer here than they do anywhere else on their tours. I doubt that there's ever been a visitor to Hong Kong who left empty-handed. You might also want to get a copy of *Suzy Gershman's Born to Shop Hong Kong, Shanghai & Beijing* to help you find what you're looking for.

1 The Shopping Scene

BEST BUYS

Hong Kong is a duty-free port, which means that imported goods are not taxed in the SAR with the exception of only a few luxury goods, such as tobacco, alcohol, and some petroleum products. What's more, there is no sales tax in Hong Kong. Thus, you can buy some goods in the SAR at a cheaper price than in the country where they were made. It's less expensive, for example, to buy Japanese products such as designer clothing, cameras, electronic goods, and pearls in Hong Kong than in Japan itself.

Although not as cheap as it once was, clothing is probably one of the best buys in Hong Kong, simply because of the sheer quantity and variety. If you've looked at the labels of clothes sold in your own hometown, you've probably noticed that many say MADE IN HONG KONG. Both custom-made and designer garments remain affordable in Hong Kong, including three-piece business suits, leather outfits, furs, sportswear, and jeans. Even cheaper are factory outlets and small stores where you can pick up inexpensive fashions for a song. But even when I end up paying about as much for an outfit as I would back home, I know I've purchased unique clothing in Hong Kong that's impossible to find in homogenized shopping malls.

Tips A Shopping Warning

Hong Kong is a buyer-beware market. Name brands are sometimes fakes; that cheap jade you bought may actually be glass; and electronic goods may not work. To make things worse, the general practice is that goods are usually not returnable, and deposits paid are not refundable.

To be on the safe side, try to make your major purchases at HKTB member stores, which display the HKTB logo (a gold circle with black Chinese calligraphy in the middle and the words "Quality Tourism Services") on their storefronts. There are hundreds of member stores, all listed in a directory called *A Guide to Quality Merchants* that you can get free from the HKTB and at www.qtshk.com. Both give the names, addresses, and phone numbers of shops that sell everything from audio-video equipment to jewelry, clothing, optical goods, antiques, and custom-made clothing. HKTB member stores are required to give accurate information on the products they sell and to respond promptly to justified complaints. Of course, prices are often higher than at nonmember stores, but the payoff should be peace of mind and reassurance that you are paying a fair price. If you have any complaints against a member store, call the **HKTB (✆ 852/2508 1234)** multilingual hot line Monday to Friday between 8am and 6pm and on Saturday, Sunday, and public holidays between 9am and 5pm, or the **Association of Better Business and Tourism Services** at **✆ 852/2806 2823.**

Hong Kong is also a great place to shop for Chinese products, including porcelain, jade, cloisonné, silk handicrafts and clothing, hand-embroidery, jewelry, and artwork. You'll also find crafts and goods from other parts of Asia, including Thailand, India, the Philippines, and Indonesia.

Other good buys include Chinese antiques, shoes, jewelry, furniture, carpets, leather goods, luggage (you'll probably need a new bag just to lug your purchases home), handbags, briefcases, Chinese herbs, and eyeglasses. Hong Kong is also one of the world's largest exporters of watches and toys. As for electronic goods and cameras, they are not the bargains they once were. Make sure, therefore, to

check prices on goods at home before you come to the SAR so that you can accurately assess a bargain. The best deals are on recently discontinued models.

If you're interested in fake name-brand watches, handbags, or clothing to impress the folks back home, you've come to the right place. Although illegal, fake name-brand goods were still being sold at Hong Kong's night markets during my last visit by vendors who were ready to flee at the first sight of an official (even cheaper prices are offered for fake designer handbags and watches just across the border in mainland China). Of course, if Customs officials spot these fake goods in your bags when you return home, they'll be confiscated.

WHEN TO SHOP

Because shopping is such big business in Hong Kong, most stores are open 7 days a week, closing only for 2 or 3 days during the Chinese New Year. Most stores open at 10am, and remain open until 7pm in Central, 9pm in Tsim Sha Tsui and Yau Ma Tei, and 9:30pm in Causeway Bay. Street markets are open every day.

The biggest and best seasonal sale takes place around the Chinese lunar new year, generally in February. All the major department stores as well as shops in many of the huge shopping complexes hold sales at this time, with prices discounted about 40%. There is also a summer sale, usually in June or July, as well as end-of-season sales in the early spring and early autumn.

GUARANTEES & RECEIPTS

It's always a good idea to obtain a receipt from the shopkeeper for your purchases, if for no other reason than as proof of value when going through Customs upon returning home. You'll also need a receipt if the product you've purchased is defective. A receipt should give a description of your purchase, including the brand name, model number, serial number, and price for electronic and photographic equipment; for jewelry and gold watches, there should be a description of the precious stones and the metal content. If you're making a purchase using a credit card, you should also ask for the customer's copy of the credit-card slip, and make sure "HK$" appears before the monetary total.

If you're interested in a camera, electronic goods, watch, or any other expensive product, be sure, first, to inspect the product carefully and make sure its voltage is compatible with that of your home country. When purchasing, make sure that all parts, pieces, and the warranty card of your purchase are included in the box. Ask the

shopkeeper for a manufacturer's guarantee, which should include the name and/or symbol of the sole agent in the SAR, a description of the model and serial number, date of purchase, name and address of the shop where you bought it, and the shop's official chop or stamp. Different products and models of the same brand may carry different warranties — some valid worldwide, others only in Hong Kong. Worldwide guarantees (which is what you'll want) must carry the name and/or symbol of the sole agent in Hong Kong for the given product. If you're in doubt, check with the relevant Hong Kong sole agent (information on sole agents for Sony, Rolex, and others can be obtained by calling the **Consumer Council** at ✆ **852/2929 2222**).

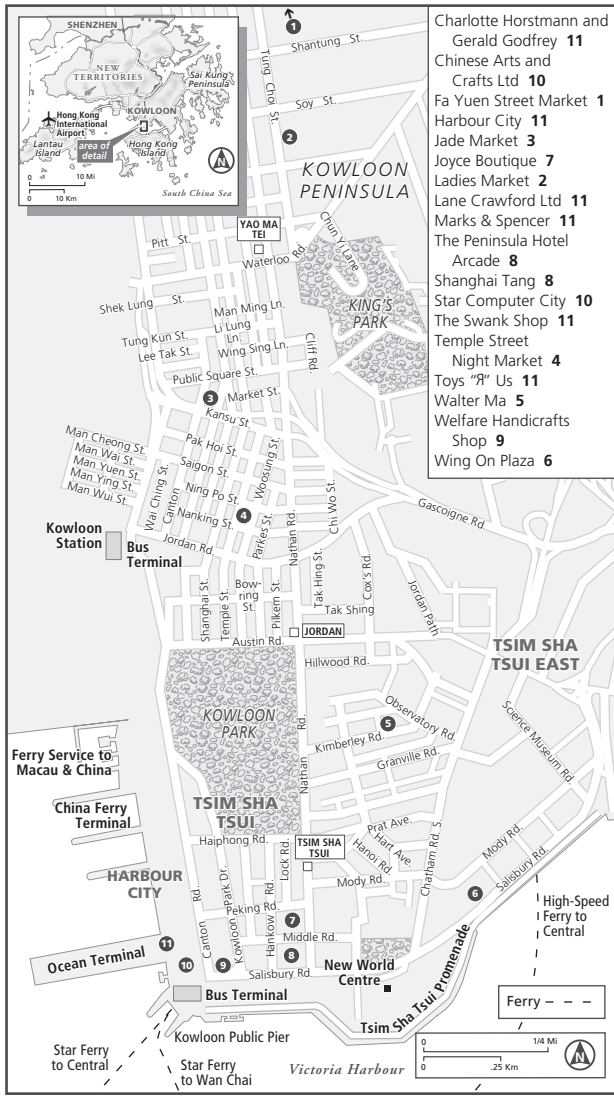
COMPARISON SHOPPING & BARGAINING

The cardinal rule of shopping in Hong Kong is to shop around. Unless you're planning to buy antiques or art, you'll probably see the same items in many different shops on both sides of the harbor. If you've decided to buy a washable silk blouse for that favorite niece, for example, check a few stores to get an idea of quality, color, and style. With the exception of department stores and designer boutiques, you may be able to bargain for your purchase, though I've noticed that some shopkeepers are less willing to bargain than they once were. Still, at some of the smaller, family-owned stores, a good strategy is to ask what the "best" price might be. You should also ask for a discount if you're buying several items from the same store, and generally speaking, you can get a better price if you pay with cash rather than by credit card. How much you pay will depend on your bargaining skills and how many items you intend to purchase. As for street markets, you most certainly must bargain, though nowadays some vendors will just shake their heads and say their prices are fixed, especially in Stanley Market. If vendors are willing to bargain, sometimes just saying the item is too expensive and starting to walk away will suddenly get you that "special price."

2 Great Shopping Areas

Hong Kong is so filled with shops, boutiques, street markets, department stores, and malls, it's hard to think of places where you *can't* shop. Still, there are specific hunting grounds for various products, as well as areas that have greater concentrations of shops than elsewhere.

Tsim Sha Tsui has the greatest concentration of shops in Hong Kong. Nathan Road, which runs through Kowloon for 4km (2½



miles) from the harbor to the border of the New Territories, is lined with stores selling clothing, jewelry, eyeglasses, cameras, electronic goods, crafts from China, shoes, handbags, luggage, watches, and

more. There are also tailors, tattoo artists, and even shops that will carve your name into a wooden chop (a stamp used in place of a signature for official documents). Be sure to explore the side streets radiating off Nathan Road, especially Mody Road for shops specializing in washable silk and casual clothing, and Granville Road for export overruns of fun, youth-oriented fashions at modest prices as well as luggage shops. There are also department stores, Chinese emporiums, and shopping arcades, as well as several huge shopping malls. Harbour City, on Canton Road, for example, is gigantic; it is comprised of Ocean Centre, Ocean Galleries, Ocean Terminal, the Hongkong Hotel Arcade, and the new Gateway Shopping Arcade. Farther north, in Yau Ma Tei, is Hong Kong's most famous outdoor market, the Temple Street Night Market, with vendors selling clothing, CDs, watches, toys, mobile phones, and accessories. There are also specialist markets in Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok selling everything from clothing and flowers to goldfish, songbirds, and jade.

For upscale shopping, **Central** is the place where you'll find international designer labels. The Landmark and Prince's Building boast boutiques selling jewelry, clothing, leather goods and more, with names ranging from A Testoni, Bvlgari, Cartier, and Chanel to Christian Dior, Fendi, Gucci, Kenzo, Helmut Lang, Lanvin, Louis Vuitton, and Tiffany & Co. Central is also a good place to shop for Chinese imports and souvenirs, especially at the hip Shanghai Tang.

Another happy hunting ground is **Causeway Bay** on Hong Kong Island. In contrast to Tsim Sha Tsui, it caters more to the local market than to tourists, and prices are often lower. In addition to small shops selling everything from shoes and clothing to Chinese herbs, there are a couple of Japanese department stores and a large shopping complex called Times Square. Check the backstreets of Causeway Bay, such as Lockhart Road and Jaffe Road, as well as the area around Jardine's Crescent, an open-air market with cheap clothing, food, and produce.

One of my favorite places to shop for inexpensive fashions is **Stanley Market** on the southern end of Hong Kong Island, where vendors sell silk clothing and business and casual wear. In recent years, shops specializing in Chinese crafts and products have also opened in Stanley Market. For shoes, get on the tram and head for Happy Valley; on Leighton Road and Wong Nai Chung Road (near the racecourse) there are rows of shoe and handbag shops.

Antiques and curio lovers usually head for **Hollywood Road** and **Cat Street** in the Western District on Hong Kong Island, where everything from snuff bottles to jade carvings and Ming vases is for

sale. Chinese handcrafts, including porcelain, furniture, silk clothing, and embroidery, are sold in Chinese-product department stores and Chinese arts-and-crafts shops located on both sides of the harbor. Several deluxe hotels boast arcades housing designer boutiques, most notably The Peninsula and Regent.

3 Shopping A to Z

The stores listed below are just a few of the thousands upon thousands in the SAR. For more detailed coverage, see the booklet *A Guide to Quality Merchants,* which lists shops that are members of the HKTB, or check the website www.qtshk.com. You might also want to look at *Suzy Gershman's Born to Shop Hong Kong, Shanghai & Beijing.*

ANTIQUES & COLLECTIBLES

Several of the Chinese-product stores, listed under "Chinese Craft Emporiums," below, also stock antiques, especially porcelain. You can also find shops selling antiques and collectibles in Harbour City, a megamall in Tsim Sha Tsui, particularly along the so-called Silk Road arcade on level 3 of Zone D (the Hongkong Hotel Arcade). Additionally, many hotel shopping arcades have at least a few shops specializing in antiques. Antiques buffs should also inquire at HKTB whether international auctioneers Christie's or Sotheby's are holding one of their regular sales for antiques in Hong Kong.

The most famous area for antiques and chinoiserie, however, is around **Hollywood Road** and **Cat Street,** both above the Central District on Hong Kong Island. This area gained fame in the 1950s, following the 1949 revolution in China (which flooded the market with family possessions). Hollywood Road twists along for a little more than .8km (½ mile), with shops selling original and reproduction Qing and Ming dynasty Chinese furniture, original prints, scrolls, porcelain, clay figurines, silver, and rosewood and black-wood furniture, as well as fakes and curios. Near the western end is Upper Lascar Row, popularly known as Cat Street, where sidewalk vendors sell snuff bottles, curios, and odds and ends. At the eastern end of Hollywood Road, near Pottinger Street, is a cluster of chic antiques shops displaying furniture and blue-and-white porcelain, including goods from neighboring Asian countries, such as Korean chests and Japanese hibachi. If you're a real antiques collector, I suggest you simply walk through the dozens of shops on and around Hollywood Road. If you cannot tell the difference between originals and

reproductions, you are better off shopping at one of the HKTB member stores, which display HKTB's gold circle and calligraphy logo.

If you're purchasing anything more than 100 years old, request a Certificate of Antiquity, along with a receipt detailing your purchase. Although it is illegal to smuggle antiques out of mainland China, many smuggled items do in fact end up in Hong Kong, where it is legal to then sell, buy, and own them. Needless to say, this has caused some friction between China and Hong Kong, especially when international auction houses have sold well-documented, smuggled Chinese antiques.

Cat Street Galleries Cat Street Galleries, on a street parallel to Cat Street, houses several individually owned booths of arts and crafts and expensive antiques from the various dynasties, making it a good place to begin an antiques shopping odyssey. It's open Monday to Friday from 11am to 6pm and Saturday from 10am to 6pm. 38 Lok Ku Rd., Central. ✆ **852/2543 1609.** MTR: Central. Bus: 26 (from Des Voeux Rd. Central in front of the Hongkong Bank) to the 2nd stop on Hollywood Rd., at Man Mo Temple.

Charlotte Horstmann and Gerald Godfrey A favorite of well-to-do antiques collectors for more than 40 years, this small shop, located in Zone C (Ocean Terminal, near the Star Ferry end) of the Harbour City shopping mall on Canton Road, is an emporium of expensive, top-quality Asian antiques, including rosewood furniture, wood carvings, and bronzes. Since the shop itself is rather small and serves mainly as an office and reception area, be sure to make an appointment to see the adjoining 10,000-square-foot warehouse. Its stock varies, but Chinese art and jade are well represented; antiques from Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, India, and Korea are usually also available. It's open Monday to Saturday from 9:30am to 6pm. Shop 100D, Ocean Terminal, Harbour City, 3 Canton Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2735 7167.** MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

China Art This family-owned shop, which has the elegance of an art gallery with its mixed displays of furniture and art, is one of Hong Kong's best for antique Chinese furniture, including chairs, tables, folding screens, chests, and wardrobes, mostly from the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). Located across from the Central Police Station, it's open Monday to Saturday from 10:30am to 6pm and Sunday from 11am to 6pm. 15 Hollywood Rd., Central. ✆ **852/2542 0982** or 852/2840 0816. MTR: Central. Bus: 26 (from Des Voeux Rd. Central in front of the Hongkong Bank) to Hollywood Rd.

Fun Fact Did You Know?

- Hong Kong people are among the world's highest per capita users of cellular phones. There are approximately 5.1 million cellular subscribers in Hong Kong, with a market penetration of 71%. Only Scandinavia has a higher per-capita usage.
- Hong Kong is Asia's second-largest gold distribution center. Over the past 10 years, it has imported about one-tenth of the world's yearly gold production.

Dragon Culture *Finds* All serious fans of Chinese antiques eventually end up here. One of the largest and most knowledgeable purveyors of antiques in Hong Kong, Victor Choi began collecting Chinese antiques in the 1970s, traveling throughout China from province to province and to all the major cities. He shares his expertise in three books: *Collecting Chinese Antiquities in Hong Kong* (a must for both the novice and experienced buyer), *Horses for Eternity,* and *Antiquities through the Ages,* which you can purchase in his shop. Choi has also given lectures on Chinese antiques in the HKTB's Meet the People program. With other galleries nearby at 184 Hollywood Rd. (✆ 852/2815 5227) and 77A Hollywood Rd. (✆ 852/2549 5300) and another one in New York, he carries Neolithic pottery, three-color glazed pottery horses from the Tang dynasty, Ming porcelains, bronzes, jade, wood carvings, snuff bottles, calligraphy, paintings, brush pots, stone carvings, and more, and also provides authenticity. According to Choi, prices for antiques are a fourth of what they'd fetch in New York. All Hong Kong shops are open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 6pm. 231 Hollywood Rd., Sheung Wan. ✆ **852/2545 8098.** www.dragonculture.com.hk. MTR: Central. Bus: 26 (from Des Voeux Rd. Central in front of the Hongkong Bank) to the 2nd stop on Hollywood Rd., at Man Mo Temple.

True Arts & Curios *Finds* This tiny shop is so packed with antiques and curios that there's barely room for customers. Although everything from snuff bottles, porcelain, antique silver, earrings, hair pins, and children's shoes (impractical but darling, with curled toes) are stocked, the true finds here are some 2,000 intricate wood carvings, pried from the doors and windows of dismantled temples and homes. You'll find them hanging from the ceiling and in bins, many of them dusty and grimy from years of

neglect. The best ones are carved from a single piece of wood, masterpieces in workmanship and available at modest prices. It's open Monday to Saturday from 10:30am to 6:30pm and Sunday from 2:30 to 6:30pm. 89–91 Hollywood Rd., Central. ✆ **852/2559 1485.** MTR: Central.

CHINA (PORCELAIN)

Chinaware, a fine, translucent earthenware, was first brought from China to Europe by the Portuguese in the 16th century. Its name was subsequently shortened to "china," and Hong Kong remains one of the best places in the world to shop for both antique (mainly from the Manchu, or Ching, dynasty, 1644–1911) and contemporary Chinese porcelain. Traditional motifs include bamboo, flowers, dragons, carp, and cranes, which adorn everything from dinner plates to vases, lamps, and jars. Also popular is translucent porcelain with a rice grain design. And, of course, European and Japanese china is also available in Hong Kong, including Meissen, Wedgwood, and Noritake.

Probably the best place to begin looking for Chinese porcelain is at one of the Chinese-product stores, listed below under "Chinese Craft Emporiums." In addition, malls and shopping centers (see "Megamalls & Shopping Centers," later in this chapter) like Pacific Place in Admiralty, Times Square in Causeway Bay, and Harbour City in Tsim Sha Tsui also have porcelain shops. If you're looking for contemporary china or replicas, or wish to commission a design of your own, you might want to visit the porcelain factory listed below. Nowadays, contemporary china is generally both dishwasher- and microwave-safe.

Overjoy Porcelain Factory With more than 400 stock designs, dinner services are the specialty here. You may also mix and match, or even create your very own design. Sets are usually commissioned for either 6, 8, or 12 diners and take 4 to 6 weeks to complete. It's open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 6pm, but because it's in the New Territories, you'd be wise to call first. 1st floor, Block B of Kwai Hing Industrial Building, 10–18 Chun Pin St., Kwai Chung, New Territories. ✆ **852/2487 0615.** MTR: Kwai Hing station; then take a taxi.

Wah Tung China Company This is reputedly the largest company specializing in hand-painted antique porcelain reproductions, especially huge pieces like vases and garden stools. Its vast collection covers all Chinese artistic periods, including Song dynasty celadons, Canton Rose, Chinoiserie, Chinese Imari, and 17th- and 18th-century Chinese export porcelain. It's open Monday to Saturday

from 9:30am to 6pm and Sunday from 11am to 5pm. A smaller but more convenient branch is located at 59 Hollywood Rd., Central (✆ 852/2543 2823; MTR: Central), open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 6:30pm and Sunday from 11am to 6pm. 14th–17th floor, Grand Marine Industrial Building, 3 Yue Fung St., Shek Pai Wan Rd., Aberdeen, Hong Kong Island. ✆ **852/2873 2272.** Bus: 70 from Exchange Sq. in Central.

CHINESE CRAFT EMPORIUMS

In addition to the shops listed here, which specialize in traditional and contemporary arts, crafts, souvenirs, and gift items from China, there are several souvenir shops at Stanley Market, located in Stanley on the southern end of Hong Kong Island, that carry lacquered boxes, china, embroidered tablecloths, figurines, and other Chinese imports.

Chinese Arts and Crafts Ltd In business for more than 30 years, this is the best upscale chain for Chinese arts and crafts and is one of the safest places to purchase jade. Prices are high, but so is the quality. You can also buy silk dresses and blouses, arts and crafts, antiques, jewelry, watches, carpets, cloisonné, furs, Chinese herbs and medicine, rosewood furniture, chinaware, Chinese teas, and embroidered tablecloths or pillowcases here — in short, virtually all the upmarket items that China produces. It's a great place for gifts in all price ranges. The main shop, located in Star House, near the Star Ferry, is open daily from 10am to 9:30pm. Other branches include Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central (✆ 852/2523 3933; MTR: Admiralty), open daily from 10:30am to 7:30pm; and in the China Resources Building, 26 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai (✆ 852/2827 6667; MTR: Wan Chai), open daily from 10:30am to 7:30pm. 3 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2735 4061.** MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Shanghai Tang *Finds* You are stepping back into the Shanghai of the 1930s when you enter this upscale, two-level store with its gleaming wooden and tiled floors, raised cashier cubicles, ceiling fans, and helpful clerks wearing classical Chinese jackets. This is Chinese chic at its best, with neatly stacked rows of updated versions of traditional Chinese clothing, ranging from cheongsams and silk pajamas to padded jackets, caps, and shoes — all in bright, contemporary colors and styles. If you're looking for a lime-green or shocking pink padded jacket, this is the place for you. There are even Shanghai tailors on hand to custom-make something for you. You will also find children's clothing and funky accessories and home furnishings, from Mao-emblazoned watches to silk-covered photo albums, beaded picture frames, and silver chopsticks. It's

open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 8pm and Sunday from 11am to 7pm. There's also a small branch in The Peninsula hotel, Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui (✆ 852/2537 2888; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui). Pedder Building, 12 Pedder St., Central. ✆ **852/2525 7333.** MTR: Central.

DEPARTMENT STORES

It will probably come as no surprise to learn that the SAR has a great many department stores. Wing On and Lane Crawford, two upmarket local chain department stores, offer a nice selection of clothing, accessories, and local and imported designer fashions, gift items, and cosmetics. Japanese department stores are also quite popular with the locals, with a couple located in Causeway Bay. Department-store hours for the branches listed below are the same as for other stores in the area (see "The Shopping Scene," earlier in this chapter).

LOCAL DEPARTMENT STORES

Lane Crawford Ltd This upscale department store, with large clothing departments for the whole family, as well as shoes, handbags, silver, and crystal, has branches on both sides of the harbor (the branch at Pacific Place is probably the best) and is similar to established chain stores in England and the United States. This main store is open daily from 10am to 7:30pm. Other branches can be found at: Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central (✆ 852/2118 3668; MTR: Admiralty); Times Square, 1 Matheson St., Causeway Bay (✆ 852/2118 3638; MTR: Causeway Bay); and Shop 100, Ocean Terminal, Harbour City, 3 Canton Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (✆ 852/2118 3428; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui). Lane Crawford House, 70 Queen's Rd. Central, Central. ✆ **852/2118 3388.** MTR: Central.

Wing On Founded in Shanghai almost a century ago and one of Hong Kong's oldest department stores, this main shop offers a wide selection of clothing, jewelry, accessories, and household items, with branches mostly in outlying areas (though a convenient branch can be found at Wing On Plaza, 62 Mody Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East; ✆ 852/2723 2211; MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui). The main branch is open Monday to Friday from 10am to 7pm and Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 6:30pm. 211 Des Voeux Rd., Central. ✆ **852/2852 1888.** MTR: Sheung Wan.

JAPANESE DEPARTMENT STORES

Mitsukoshi Mitsukoshi is a long-established department store; it first opened as a kimono shop in Japan in the 1600s and is still one of Japan's most exclusive stores. Today it houses the boutiques of

well-known designers of shoes, accessories, and clothing, with high prices to match; it also carries lingerie, cosmetics, household goods, and toys. It's open daily from 10:30am to 10pm. 500 Hennessy Rd., Causeway Bay. ✆ **852/2576 5222.** MTR: Causeway Bay.

Seibu One of the largest department-store chains in Japan (its Tokyo store is the third-largest department store in the world), this was Seibu's first store to open outside Japan. An upscale, sophisticated department store targeting Hong Kong's affluent yuppie population, it is the epitome of chic, from its Art Deco Italian furnishings to fashions from the world's top design houses. More than 65% of its merchandise is European, and 25% is from Japan. The Loft department carries well-designed housewares and gifts, while Seed is the place to go for the latest fashions. The food department in the basement is especially good, stocking many imported items that are not available elsewhere in Hong Kong; it's also a good choice in inexpensive dining, with various counters specializing in international fare. It's open Sunday to Wednesday from 10:30am to 8pm and Thursday to Saturday from 10:30am to 9pm. Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central. ✆ **852/2868 0111.** MTR: Admiralty.

Sogo Sogo is much larger and more egalitarian than the other Japanese department stores listed above; its goods are cheaper and its prices lower. Consequently, the 12-story store is often packed (particularly on Sun), filled with families shopping for clothing, toys, furniture, household goods, and electrical appliances. In the second basement is a large supermarket. It's open daily from 10am to 10pm. East Point Centre, 555 Hennessy Rd., Causeway Bay. ✆ **852/2833 8338.** MTR: Causeway Bay.

OTHER DEPARTMENT STORES

Marks & Spencer Known in Britain for its great prices on clothing and affectionately nicknamed "Marks & Sparks," this import from the United Kingdom (but with smaller sizes) is open daily from 10am to 8pm. It also has several branches on the Hong Kong side, including at Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central (✆ 852/2921 8888; MTR: Admiralty); and Times Square, 1 Matheson St., Causeway Bay (✆ 852/2923 7970; MTR: Causeway Bay). Ocean Centre, Harbour City, Canton Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2926 3330.** MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

ELECTRONICS

Because there is no import-duty or sales tax and because Hong Kong may offer the latest models months before they're available in

other countries, shopping for electronic goods has long been a popular tourist pastime. However, prices have increased for electronic products in the past few years, so if you're interested in buying a digital camera, camcorder, DVD player, computer, or other electronic product, be sure to check prices at home before you come to Hong Kong to make sure that what you would like to buy here is really a bargain. Then, head to Tsim Sha Tsui for the many shops along Nathan Road and surrounding streets specializing in electronics galore. Compare prices first, and to be on the safe side, only shop in stores that are members of HKTB. Otherwise, you may end up buying a discontinued model at inflated prices (see "A Shopping Warning," earlier in this chapter).

Camera buffs may wish to check out the used-camera stores at the Champagne Arcade, located beside the Miramar Hotel on Kimberley Road, or Stanley Street in Central for photographic equipment. For computers, try dedicated malls such as Star Computer City, located in the Star House across from the Tsim Sha Tsui Star Ferry terminal at 3 Salisbury Rd., or In Square, located at the Windsor House, 311 Gloucester Rd. in Causeway Bay. In any case, whatever you buy, be sure to inspect every piece of equipment before leaving the store (do not assume what's inside a box matches the picture on the outside), make sure equipment works and that its voltage is compatible with yours at home, and obtain warranties and receipts. For computers, look for complete packages that offer computer, printer, scanner, and software at competitive prices, and be sure that the loaded software is in English.

FABRICS

Many tailors stock their own bolts of fabric, but for one-stop fabric shopping with larger selections, the place to go is the **Western Market,** 323 Des Voeux Rd. Central, in the Western District. The first floor of this 1906 renovated brick building is lined with shop after shop selling every imaginable type of cloth, from upholstery fabric and silk to linens and Indian cottons, with approximately 16 vendors in all. The salespeople can advise almost to the inch how much fabric you'll need for any outfit, even if all you have to show them is a drawing. The Western Market shops are open daily from 10am to 7pm. The nearest MTR station is Sheung Wan, or take the tram to Sheung Wan.

Other good places to look for silk are the emporiums listed under "Chinese Craft Emporiums," earlier in this chapter.

FASHION

Ever since Hong Kong received a large influx of Shanghainese tailors following the revolution in China in 1949, Hong Kong has been a center for the fashion industry. Today, clothing remains one of Hong Kong's best buys, and many major international design houses have boutiques here; several have factories as well, either here or just across the border in Guangzhou. There are also a number of Hong Kong designers to watch out for, including Vivienne Tam, Walter Ma, Lulu Cheung, and Barney Cheng.

If you're looking for international designer brands and don't care about price, there are several arcades and shopping centers known for their brand names. The **Landmark,** located on Des Voeux Road Central in Central, is an ultrachic shopping complex boasting the highest concentration of international brand names in Hong Kong, including Gucci, Tiffany & Co., Polo/Ralph Lauren, Manolo Blahnik, Missoni, Helmut Lang, Sonia Rykiel, A Testoni, Louis Vuitton, Lanvin, Valentino, and Christian Dior, as well as restaurants and other shops. The shops here are generally open daily from 10:30am to 7:30pm. Other shopping arcades with well-known international designer boutiques include the **Prince's Building,** next to the Mandarin Hotel, with boutiques for Cartier, Chanel, and others, and **The Peninsula hotel,** on Salisbury Road in Tsim Sha Tsui, with concessions for Hermès, Louis Vuitton, Loewe, Chanel, Gucci, Dior, Shanghai Tang, Prada, and Manolo Blahnik, to name only a few.

For trendier designs catering to an upwardly mobile younger crowd, check out the **Joyce Boutique** chain, the first fashion house in Hong Kong, established in the 1970s by Joyce Ma to satisfy Hong Kong women's cravings for European designs. Today her stores carry clothing by Issey Miyake, John Galliano, Yohji Yamamoto, Rei Kawakubo (Comme des Garçons), and others on the cutting edge of fashion. You'll find Joyce shops at 18 Queen's Rd. Central, Central District (✆ **852/2810 1120;** MTR: Central); 334 Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central (✆ **852/2523 5944;** MTR: Admiralty); and 23 Nathan Rd. in Tsim Sha Tsui (✆ **852/2367 8128;** MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui).

For clothing by local designers, shop for Barney Cheng's classy evening wear at The Swank Shop, Shop 237F-G, Deck 2 in Ocean Terminal of Harbour City in Tsim Sha Tsui (✆ **852/2736 8757;** MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui); the zany fashions of Walter Ma at 49 Kimberley Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (✆ **852/2739 4022;** MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui); and the Chinese chic designs with a Western twist by

Vivienne Tam at Shop 209, Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central (✆ **852/2523 6620;** MTR: Admiralty).

For a wider range in prices, the department stores listed above are best for one-stop shopping for the entire family, as are Hong Kong's many malls and shopping centers. Otherwise, small, family-owned shops abound in both Tsim Sha Tsui and Stanley Market, offering casual wear, washable silk outfits, and other clothing at very affordable prices. Cheaper still are factory outlets and street markets (see below).

FACTORY OUTLETS Savvy shoppers head for Hong Kong's factory outlets to buy at least some of their clothes. These outlets sell excess stock, overruns, and quality-control rejects; because these items have been made for the export market, the sizes are Western. Bargains include clothes made of silk, cashmere, cotton, linen, knitwear, and wool, and some outlets have men's and children's clothing as well. Some manufacturers even produce clothing for famous designer labels, though it's not unusual to find labels cut out. Although scattered throughout the territory, the most convenient outlets are in the Central District on Hong Kong Island or Hung Hom and Tsim Sha Tsui in Kowloon.

There are, however, a few caveats about shopping in factory outlets. For one thing, you never know in advance what will be on sale, and sometimes the selection is disappointing. If you do find something, it's important to carefully examine garments inside and out. What's more, some outlets are indistinguishable from upmarket boutiques, with prices to match. Unfortunately, it seems that some shops simply call themselves "factory outlets" because that's what tourists are looking for. Thus, unless you have lots of time, it may not be worth your while to go to the outlets in Hung Hom in search of a good deal.

On Hong Kong Island, the best-known building that houses factory-outlet showrooms is the **Pedder Building,** 12 Pedder St., Central. During my last visit, I counted 30-some shops here located on six floors, but not all of these shops are factory outlets — many are just regular boutiques with the same merchandise at the same prices found at their other branches. In addition, a new trend seems to be shops selling used designer wear, shoes, and handbags, making it good for bargains in last season's fashions. In any case, it's convenient to have so many shops in one building and it's fun to just poke around.

On the Kowloon side, there are a few factory outlets scattered in the heart of Tsim Sha Tsui, with a couple on **Granville Road.** The

largest concentration of factory outlets, however, is in Hung Hom, clustered in a large group of warehouse buildings called **Kaiser Estates** on Man Yue Street. Although the Kaiser Estates themselves comprise huge concrete factory buildings, the many outlet shops inside look just like ordinary shops. To reach the Kaiser Estates, take bus no. 5C from the Tsim Sha Tsui Star Ferry bus terminal to Ma Tau Wai Road (the third stop after the KCR Kowloon Railway Station).

For a list of factory outlets along with their addresses, telephone numbers, and types of clothing, pick up the free pamphlet *Factory Outlets for Locally Made Fashion and Jewellery,* available at HKTB offices. Most outlets are open from 9 or 10am to 6 or 7pm Monday to Friday, with shorter hours on Saturdays. Some are open Sunday as well.

GIFTS & SOUVENIRS

The Chinese product emporiums listed earlier in this chapter under "Chinese Craft Emporiums" offer a wide array of souvenirs and gifts. For one-stop shopping, I suggest a trip to **Chinese Arts and Crafts Ltd** (p. 145), which has several branches in Hong Kong. Other places to look for souvenirs include hotel shopping arcades, Nathan Road in Tsim Sha Tsui, Stanley Market on Hong Kong Island, Western Market in the Western District, and the megamalls.

I also make a point of stopping at the tiny **Welfare Handicrafts Shop,** which began more than 30 years ago as an outlet for crafts and goods made by Chinese refugees. Today, many of the items are made by local disadvantaged people or people with disabilities, and the proceeds go to charity, so I always stop by to see whether there are small items that might make nice presents. Items for sale include T-shirts, porcelain, silk coin purses, pincushions, greeting cards, small cast-iron statues, and other souvenirs. You'll find the shop conveniently located in Tsim Sha Tsui on Salisbury Road, between the YMCA and the Star Ferry Concourse (✆ **852/2366 6979;** MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui). It's open Monday to Saturday from 9am to 5:30pm.

JEWELRY

According to the HKTB, Hong Kong has more jewelry stores per square mile than any other city in the world. Gems are imported duty-free from all over the world, and Hong Kong is reputedly the world's third-largest trading center for diamonds. Gold jewelry, both imported and locally made, is required by law to carry a stamp stating the accurate gold content.

Jade, of course, remains the most popular item of jewelry for both visitors and Chinese. It's believed to protect wearers against illness and ward off bad luck. The two categories of jade are jadeite and nephrite. Jadeite (also called Burmese jade) is generally white to apple green in color, although it also comes in hues of brown, red, orange, yellow, and even lavender. It may be mottled, but the most expensive variety is a translucent emerald green. Nephrite, which is less expensive, is usually a dark green or off-white. In any case, true jade is so hard that supposedly even a knife leaves no scratch. Unless you know your jade, your best bet is to shop in one of the Chinese-product stores, listed earlier in this chapter under "Chinese Craft Emporiums." For less expensive pieces and souvenirs, visit the Jade Market, described below under "Markets."

Pearls, almost all of which are cultured, are also popular among shoppers in Hong Kong. There are both sea- and freshwater pearls, available in all shapes, sizes, colors, and lusters. For inexpensive strands, check the vendors at the Jade Market. There are also many shops along Nathan Road in Tsim Sha Tsui that retail pearls.

If you're a real jewelry fan, you'll want to visit some of the jewelry factory outlets scattered throughout Hong Kong, including Tsim Sha Tsui, Hung Hom, and Aberdeen. At some outlets, visitors will be asked to register and then will be shown around the factory itself, where they can observe the designs being drawn, learn how the stones are graded, and see the final polishing. After the tour, visitors are taken to the shop that sells finished products. For a list of jewelry factory outlets, contact the Hong Kong Tourist Board.

MARKETS

Markets offer the best deals in Hong Kong, though a lot depends on how well you can bargain. Be sure to scrutinize the items that interest you carefully, since you won't be able to return them. Check clothing for faults, tears, cuts, marks, and uneven seams and hemlines. Make sure electronic gadgets work; the cheap Pikachu alarm clock I bought my son lasted only a week: It's a buyer-beware market in the SAR.

HONG KONG ISLAND

STANLEY The Stanley Market is probably the most popular and best-known market in Hong Kong. Located on the southern coast of Hong Kong Island on a small peninsula, it's a great place to buy inexpensive clothing, especially sportswear, cashmere sweaters, casual clothing, silk blouses and dresses, and even linen blazers and outfits suitable for work. Men's, women's, and children's clothing

are available. During my last visit, shopkeepers were not keen about bargaining, no doubt because tourists come here by the busload. In fact, Stanley is not as cheap as it once was, and many shops are remodeling and becoming more chic and expensive. In addition, souvenir shops selling Chinese paintings, embroidered linen, beaded purses, handicrafts, and curios have encroached on the scene, reducing the number of clothing shops. Still, you're bound to find at least something you're wild about. The inventory changes continuously — one year it seems everyone is selling tie-dyed shirts, the next year it's linen suits, washable silk, Chinese traditional jackets, or Gore-Tex winter coats. I usually walk through the market first, taking note of things I like and which stores they're in, and then I compare prices as I walk through. Most stores carry the same products, so it pays to comparison-shop.

To reach Stanley, take bus no. 6, 6A, 6X, or 260 from Central's Exchange Square bus terminal near the Star Ferry (bus no. 260 also makes stops in front of the Star Ferry terminal and Pacific Place). The bus ride to Stanley takes approximately 30 minutes. From Kowloon, take bus no. 973 from Mody Road in Tsim Sha Tsui East or from Canton Road in Tsim Sha Tsui. The shops are open daily from 9:30 or 10am to 6pm (to 7pm Sat–Sun).

LI YUEN STREET EAST & WEST These two streets are parallel pedestrian lanes in the heart of the Central District, very narrow, and often congested with human traffic. Stalls are packed with handbags, clothes, scarves, sweaters, toys, baby clothes, watches, makeup, umbrellas, needles and thread, knickknacks, and even brassieres. Don't neglect the open-fronted shops behind the stalls. Some of these are boutiques selling fashionable but cheap clothing as well as shoes, purses, and accessories. These two streets are located just a couple of minutes' walk from the Central MTR station or the Star Ferry, between Des Voeux Road Central and Queen's Road Central. Vendors are open daily from 10am to 6pm.

JARDINE'S CRESCENT The open-air market that spreads along this narrow street in Causeway Bay is a traditional Chinese market for produce, household goods, cheap clothing, and accessories, including shoes, costume jewelry, handbags, hair accessories, children's clothing, and cosmetics. Though you may not find something worth taking home at this very local market, it's fun just to walk around. The nearest MTR station is Causeway Bay (take exit F), but you can also reach this area easily by tram. The best time to visit is between 11am and 6:30pm daily, though it's open until 10pm.

WANCHAI MARKET This local market, centered on Spring Garden Lane and Wan Chai Road (between Johnston Rd. and Queen's Rd. East), is very much a local market, attracting housewives with its wet markets and household goods, but also young office workers with its stalls selling clothing originally meant for export. It's located near the Wanchai MTR Station and is open daily from 7am to 7pm.

KOWLOON

JADE MARKET Jade, believed by the Chinese to hold mystical powers and to protect its wearer, is available in all sizes, colors, and prices at the Jade Market, located at the junction of Kansu Street and Battery Street in two temporary structures in the Yau Ma Tei District. The jade comes from Burma, China, Australia, and Taiwan. Unless you know your jade, you won't want to make any expensive purchases here, but the quality of jade sold here is great for bangles, pendants, earrings, and inexpensive gifts. This market is also recommended for pearls, especially inexpensive freshwater pearls from China. You can pick up some strands at a good price. Otherwise, this market is fun just for its unique atmosphere.

The Jade Market is open daily from 10am to about 4pm (mornings are best), though some vendors stay until 6pm. It's located near the Jordan MTR station or is less than a 30-minute walk from the Star Ferry.

LADIES' MARKET If you want to shop at a market on the Kowloon side in the daytime, this large market, popular with Hong Kong Chinese, is your best bet. Stretching along Tung Choi Street (between Argyle and Dundas sts.) in Mong Kok, it serves as a lively market for inexpensive women's and children's fashions, shoes, socks, hosiery, jewelry, sunglasses, watches, handbags (including fake designer handbags), and other accessories. Some men's clothing is also sold. Although many of the products are geared more to local tastes and sizes, an increasing number of tourists has brought more fashionable clothing and T-shirts, and you may find a few bargains. In any case, the atmosphere is fun and festive, especially at night. The nearest MTR station is Mong Kok. Vendors are open daily from about noon to 10:30pm.

FA YUEN STREET MARKET Located just a few minutes' walk north of Ladies' Market, north of Mong Kok Road, this street market is geared to local residents rather than tourists and offers clothing for women and children, as well as toys and produce. With laundry fluttering from the apartments above, this is a typical Mong

Kok Street, full of character. The nearest MTR station is Prince Edward, and stalls are open from 9:30am to 8pm daily.

TEMPLE STREET NIGHT MARKET Temple Street, in the Yau Ma Tei District of Kowloon, is a night market that comes to life when the sun goes down. It offers the usual products sold by street vendors, including T-shirts, jeans, menswear, watches, lighters, pens, sunglasses, jewelry, CDs, mobile phones, electronic gadgets, alarm clocks, luggage, and imitation designer watches and handbags. Bargain fiercely, and check the products carefully to make sure they're not faulty or poorly made. The night market is great entertainment, a must during your visit to Hong Kong, though the surge of shoppers can be overwhelming. North of Temple Street, near Tin Hau Temple, are fortune-tellers and sometimes even street-side performers singing Chinese opera.

Although some vendors begin setting up shop at 4pm, the Night Market is busiest from about 7pm until it closes at 10pm, and is located near the Jordan MTR station.

MEGAMALLS & SHOPPING CENTERS

Hong Kong boasts shopping complexes that are so huge I call them "megamalls." They are literally everywhere and are open daily, with most businesses operating roughly between 10am and 8pm.

Aside from the more convenient ones listed below, other Hong Kong megamalls include **Festival Walk** (located above Kowloon Tong MTR Station), the **New Town Plaza** in Sha Tin in the New Territories, and the **Taikoo Shing City Plaza,** located at the Taikoo MTR station on Hong Kong Island.

Harbour City This is the largest of the megamalls, and certainly one of the largest in Asia. Conveniently located right next to the dock that disgorges passengers from cruise liners and just to the east of the Star Ferry, it encompasses several zoned areas: Zone A, Zone B (Ocean Centre), Zone C (Ocean Terminal), and Zone D (the Hongkong Hotel Arcade), all interconnected by air-conditioned walkways and stretching more than .8km (½) mile along Canton Road. Altogether, there are more than 700 outlets, with shops selling clothing, accessories, jewelry, cosmetics, antiques, electronic goods, furniture, housewares, toys, Asian arts and crafts, and much more. There's enough to keep you occupied here for the rest of your life, but this is an especially good place to go on a rainy or humid day when you'd rather be inside than out. Branches include Lane Crawford, Marks & Spencer, Burberry, Plantation, Salvatore Ferragamo, Vivienne Tam, Bally, Louis Vuitton, Gold Pfeil, and

Toys 'R' Us. Some shops are closed on Sunday but otherwise the hours are about 10 or 11am to 8pm. Canton Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2118 8668.** MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Pacific Place Pacific Place is the largest and most ambitious commercial project to hit Central; in fact, it has shifted the city center toward the east. Besides three hotels, Pacific Place has a mall with 200 retail stores and restaurants and three major department stores (Marks & Spencer, Lane Crawford, and Seibu). Shops include the Body Shop, Cartier, Cerruti 1881, Escada, Hermès, Hugo Boss, Joyce, Vivienne Tam, Prada, Shu Uemura, Tiffany & Co., and Chinese Arts and Crafts Ltd. Most shops are open daily from about 10:30am to 8pm. 88 Queensway, Central. ✆ **852/2801 4197.** MTR: Admiralty.

Times Square This stylish center offers nine "themed" floors of shopping, including the Casual Living floor, the Home Furnishings floor, the Sports and Leisure floor, the Electronics floor, the Family Land floor with a play area and shops selling toys and children's clothing, and even several Food Forum floors with branches of well-known restaurants. Marks & Spencer and Lane Crawford department stores are also here. Most shops are open daily from 10am to 9:30pm. 1 Matheson St., Causeway Bay. ✆ **852/2118 8900.** MTR: Causeway Bay.

TAILORS

The 24-hour suit is a thing of the past, but you can still have clothes custom-made in a few days. Tailoring in Hong Kong really began in the 1950s, when tailor families from Shanghai fled China and set up shop in Hong Kong. Today, prices are no longer as low as they once were, but they're often about what you'd pay for a ready-made garment back home; the difference, of course, is that a tailor-made garment should fit you perfectly. The standards of the better, established shops rival even those of London's Savile Row — at less than half the price. A top-quality man's suit will run about HK$7,000 (US$910) or more, including fabric, while a silk shirt can cost HK$600 (US$78).

Tailors in Hong Kong will make anything you want, from business suits and evening gowns to wedding dresses, leather jackets, and monogrammed shirts. Some stores will allow you to provide your own fabric, while others require that you buy theirs. Many tailors offer a wide range of cloth from which to choose, from cotton and linen to very fine wools, cashmere, and silk. Hong Kong tailors are excellent at copying fashions, even if all you have is a picture or drawing of what you want.

On average, you should allow 3 to 5 days to have a garment custom-made, with at least two or three fittings. Be specific about what you want, such as lining, tightness of fit, buttons, and length. If you aren't satisfied during the fittings, speak up. Alterations should be included in the original price (ask about this during your first negotiations). If, in the end, you still don't like the finished product, you don't have to accept it. However, you will forfeit the deposit you are required to pay before the tailor begins working, usually about 50% of the total cost.

With more than 2,500 tailoring establishments in Hong Kong, it shouldn't be any problem finding one. Some of the most famous are located in hotel shopping arcades and shopping complexes, but the more upscale the location, the higher the prices. Tsim Sha Tsui abounds in tailor shops; one of the most well known is Sam's Tailor, 94 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (✆ **852/2367 9432;** MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui). In any case, your best bet is to deal only with shops that are members of the HKTB or those you have used before. Member shops are listed in the booklet *A Guide to Quality Merchants* talked about earlier in this chapter.

Once you've had something custom-made and your tailor has your measurements, you will more than likely be able to order additional clothing later, even after you've returned home!

7 Hong Kong After Dark

Nightlife in Hong Kong seems pretty tame when compared with that in Tokyo or Bangkok. With the world of Suzie Wong in Wan Chai now a shadow of its former wicked self, Hong Kong today seems somewhat reserved and, perhaps to some minds, yawningly dull. For the upper crust who live here, exclusive clubs are popular for socializing and entertaining guests, while the vast majority of Chinese are likely to spend their free evenings at one of those huge lively restaurants.

Yet it would be wrong to assume that the SAR has nothing to offer in the way of nightlife — it's just that you probably won't get into any trouble enjoying yourself. To find out what's going on during your stay in the SAR, be sure to pick up *What's On — Hong Kong,* an HKTB leaflet published weekly that tells what's happening in theater, music, and the arts, including concerts and Chinese opera. *HK Magazine,* distributed free at restaurants, bars, and other outlets around town and aimed at a young readership, is a weekly that lists what's going on at the city's theaters and other venues, including plays, concerts, the cinema, and events in Hong Kong's alternative scene. *Where Hong Kong* and *bc* are two other free magazines published monthly with nightlife information and special events. Finally, you can also find out what's going on for the upcoming week by visiting the Hong Kong Tourist Board online at **www.discoverhongkong.com**. Remember that a 10% service charge will be added to your food/drinks bill.

1 The Performing Arts

The busiest time of the year for the performing arts is the month-long **Hong Kong Arts Festival,** held every year in February and March. This international 3-week affair features artists from around the world performing with orchestras, dance troupes, opera companies, and chamber ensembles. For information about the Hong Kong Arts Festival programs and future dates, call ✆ **852/2824 2430** or visit www.hk.artsfestival.org.

To obtain tickets for the Hong Kong Arts Festival, as well as tickets throughout the year for classical-music performances (including the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra and the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra), Chinese opera, rock and pop concerts, theatrical productions, dance, and other major events, contact the **Urban Council Ticketing Office (URBTIX),** the ticketing system run by the government's Leisure and Cultural Service Department. There are convenient URBTIX outlets in City Hall, Low Block, 7 Edinburgh Place in Central, open daily from 10am to 9:30pm, and the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, 10 Salisbury Rd. in Tsim Sha Tsui, open daily from 10am to 9:30pm. Simply drop by one of the outlets, or reserve a ticket in advance by calling URBTIX at ✆ **852/2734 9009.** You can even reserve tickets before arriving in Hong Kong (for a $20 processing charge) by calling the URBTIX overseas hot line at ✆ **852/2734 9011,** from 10am to 8pm Hong Kong time. Tickets are also sold through **Ticketek,** with an outlet at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, 1 Gloucester Rd., Wan Chai (✆ **852/3128 8288;** www.ticketek.com.hk/eng/), open daily from 10am to 6pm.

PERFORMING-ARTS COMPANIES

CHINESE OPERA

Chinese opera predates the first Western opera by about 600 years, although it wasn't until the 13th and 14th centuries that performances began to develop a structured operatic form, with rules of composition and fixed role characterization. Distinct regional styles also developed, and even today there are marked differences among the operas performed in, say, Peking, Canton, Shanghai, Fukien, Chiu Chow, and Sichuan.

Most popular in Hong Kong, however, is Peking-style opera, with its spectacular costumes, elaborate makeup, and feats of acrobatics and swordsmanship, and the less flamboyant but more readily understood Cantonese-style opera. Plots usually dramatize legends and historical events, and extol such virtues as loyalty, filial piety, and righteousness. Accompanied by seven or eight musicians, the performers sing in shrill, high-pitched falsetto, a sound Westerners sometimes do not initially appreciate. Although lyrics are in Chinese, body language helps translate the stories.

Another aspect of Chinese opera that surprises Westerners is its informality. No one minds if spectators arrive late or leave early; in fact, no one even minds if a spectator, upon spotting friends or relatives, makes his or her way through the auditorium for a chat.

Cantonese opera is performed fairly regularly at Town Halls in the New Territories, as well as in City Hall in Central and the Hong Kong Cultural Centre in Tsim Sha Tsui. However, Chinese opera is immensely popular in Hong Kong, so much so that tickets for these shows sell out well in advance, making it almost impossible for tourists to attend performances. If you're still determined to try, call the URBTIX overseas hot line well in advance of your arrival in Hong Kong, or, once in the SAR, contact the HKTB or check with one of the tourist publications for information on what's playing and then call or drop by URBTIX. Alternatively, the concierge of your hotel may be able to secure seats. Prices generally range from about HK$100 to HK$300 (US$13–US$39).

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra Established in 1977, the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra is the world's largest professional Chinese-instrument orchestra (they play Chinese instruments, mainly stringed, which are completely different from Western violins, cellos, etc.). It features more than 80 full-time musicians who perform both new works and traditional pieces in approximately 30 concerts annually, playing a wide range of traditional and modern Chinese instruments and combining them with Western orchestrations or Chinese music. Performing at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, 10 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (✆ **852/2734 2009**), and City Hall, Edinburgh Place, Central District (✆ **852/2921 2840**). Tickets HK$90–HK$150 (US$12–US$19). MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui for Cultural Centre or Central for City Hall.

Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra The Hong Kong Cultural Centre is the home of the city's largest (Western-style) orchestra: the Hong Kong Philharmonic, founded in 1975. It performs regularly from September to June and at other scheduled events throughout the year, such as providing live accompaniment to the Hong Kong Ballet. Its conductor is David Atherton; guest conductors and soloists appear during the concert season. In addition to Western classical pieces, its repertoire is enriched by works commissioned from Chinese composers. Performing at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, 10 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui (✆ **852/2734 2009**), and City Hall, Edinburgh Place, Central District (✆ **852/2921 2840**). Tickets HK$60–HK$250 (US$7.80–US$32). MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui for Cultural Centre or Central for City Hall.

DANCE

Both the **Hong Kong Ballet Company** and the **Hong Kong Dance Company** have extensive repertoires. The Hong Kong Ballet

Company (✆ **852/2573 7393;** www.hkballet.com), founded in 1979, performs both classical works and modern pieces, usually at the Cultural Centre or the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. The Hong Kong Dance Company (✆ **852/2853 2642;** www.lcsd.gov.hk/hkdc) specializes in traditional Chinese dance and the development of Chinese dance in modern forms, with about five major productions each year.

THEATER

Most plays presented in the SAR are performed in Cantonese. Hong Kong's leading local troupes are the **Chung Ying Theatre Company,** a community ensemble that plays in a wide range of venues, from schools and seniors' homes to Hong Kong's main theaters, often performing works by local writers, and the **Hong Kong Repertory Theatre,** which performs original Chinese works. Both perform in Cantonese at various venues, including City Hall in Central and the Hong Kong Cultural Centre in Tsim Sha Tsui. Prices range from about HK$100 to HK$160 (US$13–US$21).

Otherwise, your best bet for English-language performances is at the **Fringe Club,** 2 Lower Albert Rd., Central (✆ **852/2521 7251;** MTR: Central), a venue for experimental drama (in English and Cantonese), live music, comedy, art exhibitions, and other happenings, from mime to magic shows.

2 The Club & Music Scene

LIVE MUSIC

Hong Kong does not have the kind of jazz-, rock-, or blues-club scene that many other cities do. On the other hand, live music is such a standard feature of many restaurants, hotel cocktail lounges, and bars, that it would be hard *not* to hear live music in the SAR. Although some establishments levy a cover charge, most charge absolutely nothing.

Because live music is regarded more as a sidelight than the raison d'être of most Hong Kong establishments, if you're serious about music, you will want to head straight to one of the venues described below.

Fringe Club *Value* Hong Kong's best-known venue for alternative events offers free live music most Fridays and Saturdays from 10:30pm at its Ernest & Julio Gallo Gallery, including blues, jazz, folk, and funk. Call for an updated listing, visit its website, or pick up the Fringe Club's monthly calendar. Incidentally, on the rooftop

is one of Central's few alfresco bars. Open Monday through Thursday from noon to midnight and Friday through Saturday from noon until 2am. 2 Lower Albert Rd., Central. ✆ **852/2521 7251.** www.hkfringeclub.com. No cover. MTR: Central.

The Jazz and Blues Club & Bar Small and intimate, this has long been Hong Kong's most established jazz venue, but a recent management decision to widen the club's focus to include other styles of music has brought much dismay to local jazz aficionados. Jazz by American, Japanese, European, and local musicians is still very much on the agenda, but you'll want to phone ahead to avoid disappointment. It's open Tuesday to Thursday from 7pm to 1:30am (live music 9pm–12:30am) and Friday and Saturday from 6pm to 2:30am (live music 10pm–1am). California Entertainment Building (2nd floor), 34–36 D'Aguilar, Central. ✆ **852/2845 8477.** Cover usually HK$60–HK$150 (US$7.80–US$20) for local acts and up to HK$300 (US$39) for international bands. MTR: Central.

JJ's This upscale, glitzy entertainment complex was the first in Hong Kong to offer several diversions under one roof. A recent revamping is assured to keep it in the limelight. It's huge, with a main bar, pool table, food (pizza, tapas, and snacks) served in various places throughout, an upscale music room with live jazz and blues, and a supper club featuring contemporary Latin music, Brazilian flair (even the bartenders are flown in from Brazil), and an impressive list of rums. This is the place for those who like to move from one scene to the next, without actually having to go anywhere. Note, however, that dress is smart casual (no tennis shoes, sandals, torn jeans, or shorts allowed). Monday to Friday you can have two drinks for the price of one during happy hour from 6 to 8:30pm, along with a free snack buffet from 6 to 8pm. JJ's is open Monday to Thursday from 6pm to 2am, Friday from 6pm to 3am, and Saturday from 7pm to 4am. In the Grand Hyatt Hotel, 1 Harbour Rd., Wan Chai. ✆ **852/2588 1234,** ext. 7323. Cover (including 1 drink) HK$100 (US$13). No cover before 9:30pm. MTR: Wan Chai.

DANCE CLUBS

Disco fever has cooled considerably since the heady days of the early 1980s, with only a couple of discos weathering the years. More prevalent are small, simple bars that metamorphose into miniature discos late at night or on weekends. Discos and dance clubs in Hong Kong generally charge more on weekend nights, but the admission price usually includes one or two free drinks. After that, beer and

mixed drinks are often priced the same. Bars, whether with DJs or live music, rarely charge cover.

CENTRAL DISTRICT

C Club With a seductive interior of velvet sofas and a curved bar, all bathed in red lighting, this basement club packs 'em in with underground house music, techno-beat, and noncommercial sounds created by international and resident DJs. If you come on a weekend, be prepared to join the queue of beautiful people lined up outside waiting to be let in. It's open Monday to Thursday from 6pm to 2am, Friday from 6pm to 5am, and Saturday from 9pm to 5am. California Tower, 30–32 D'Aguilar, Lan Kwai Fong, Central. ✆ **852/2526 1139.** No cover Mon–Thurs; cover HK$100 (US$13) Fri–Sat. MTR: Central.

Propaganda Hong Kong's longest-standing and most popular gay disco, Propaganda moved into upgraded quarters a few years back in the new SoHo nightlife district, with a discreet entrance in a back alley (it's a bit hard to find; look for the alley off Pottinger St.). Only about 5% of the people who come through the doors are straight, but everyone is welcome. Come late on a weekend if you want to see this alternative hotspot at its most crowded. It's open Tuesday to Thursday from 9pm to 3:30am, Friday and Saturday from 9pm to 5am. 1 Hollywood Rd., Central. ✆ **852/2868 1316.** No cover Tues–Thurs; cover HK$80 (US$10) Fri; HK$80 (US$10) Sat before 10:30pm and after 3am; HK$120 (US$16) Sat 10:30pm–3am. MTR: Central.

CAUSEWAY BAY & WAN CHAI

Joe Bananas Appealing to Hong Kong's single yuppies, this is a bar and restaurant that transforms itself into a happening disco every evening after 11:30pm, but the action doesn't kick in till later. Ladies get in free until 1am and even get free drinks on Wednesday from 6pm to midnight. There's dancing Sunday to Thursday from 11:30pm to 5am and on Friday and Saturday from 11:30pm to 6am. 23 Luard Rd., Wan Chai. ✆ **852/2529 1811.** No cover Sun–Thurs; Fri–Sat HK$100 (US$13), including 1 drink. Free for women until 1am. MTR: Wan Chai.

3 The Bar Scene

COCKTAIL LOUNGES

Although virtually all hotels in Hong Kong have cocktail lounges, I've limited my selection here to three with great views — since you're in one of the most romantically beautiful cities in the world, why settle for anything less?

KOWLOON

Lobby Lounge *Value* This comfortable cocktail lounge boasts gorgeous, water-level views of Victoria Harbour and Hong Kong Island. You'll fall in love all over again (with Hong Kong, your companion, or both) as you take in one of the world's most famous views, listen to a live band (from 6–11pm), and imbibe one of the bar's famous martinis. Unlike other hotel cocktail lounges with live music, the Lobby Lounge doesn't impose a minimum drink charge. It's open daily from 8am to 2am. In Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong, 18 Salisbury Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2721 1211.** MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Sky Lounge This plush and comfortable lounge is on the top floor of the Sheraton, affording one of the best and most romantic views of the harbor and glittering Hong Kong Island. There's soft live music Monday through Saturday nights from 9pm to midnight. Unless you're a hotel guest, from 8:30pm onward there's a minimum drink charge of HK$138 (US$18) per person. Or, on weekends, come earlier for the afternoon tea buffet, available from 2 to 5pm for HK$118 (US$15). It's open Sunday to Thursday from 2pm to 1am and Friday and Saturday from 2pm to 2am. In the Sheraton Hotel and Towers, 20 Nathan Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2369 1111.** MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

CENTRAL DISTRICT

Cyrano This sophisticated, intimate lounge is Hong Kong's highest — on the 56th floor with great views of the harbor. Decorated in a style reminiscent of the 1930s, it offers a small dance floor and live music Tuesday through Saturday nights from 9pm. On Friday and Saturday there's a minimum drink charge of HK$150 (US$19; waived for hotel guests). Cocktails, averaging HK$80 (US$10), are a specialty. It's open Monday to Thursday from 5pm to 1am and Friday and Saturday from 5pm to 2am. In the Island Shangri-La, Pacific Place, 88 Queensway, Central. ✆ **852/2877 3838.** MTR: Admiralty.

PUBS & BARS

KOWLOON

Bahama Mama's One of several bars lining the narrow, alleylike Knutsford Terrace, which parallels Kimberley Road to the north, this one is decorated in a kitschy Caribbean theme and offers a few tables outside, Foosball, and a small dance floor and in-house DJ. Happy hour is daily from 5 to 9pm. Drink specialties include fruit cocktails and tequila shots. Maybe that's what leads to late-night dancing on the bar. It's open Monday to Thursday from 5pm to 3am, Friday and

Saturday from 5pm to 4am, and Sunday from 4pm to 2am. 4–5 Knutsford Terrace, Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2368 2121.** MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Chasers Next to Bahama Mama's, this is among the most popular and longest-standing bars on Knutsford Terrace, filled with a mixed clientele that includes both the young and the middle-aged, foreign and Chinese. One of Hong Kong's first late-night haunts to actively promote the live-music scene, it features a house Filipino band nightly from 10:30pm, playing rock, jazz, rhythm and blues, and everything in between. There is no cover charge. Happy hour is from noon to 9pm Sunday and the rest of the week from 5 to 9pm. It's open daily from noon to 6am. 2–3 Knutsford Terrace, Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2367 9487.** MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Delaney's This very successful, upmarket Irish pub is decorated in old-world style with its old posters and photographs. Its convivial atmosphere gets an extra boost from a DJ Thursday nights and a live Irish band Friday nights, both free of charge. Big soccer and rugby events are shown on a big screen. In addition to a set carvery lunch offered weekends, it also has an a la carte menu listing Irish stew, beef and Guinness pie, corned beef and cabbage, and other national favorites. Happy hour is from 5 to 9pm daily; open hours are daily from 10:30am to 2:30am. There's another Delaney's in Wan Chai at 18 Luard Rd. (✆ 852/2804 2880). 71–77 Peking Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2301 3980.** MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

Ned Kelly's Last Stand Named after one of Down Under's most famous outlaws, this is a lively Aussie saloon, with free live Dixieland jazz or swing Monday to Saturday from 9:30pm to 1am and attracting a largely middle-aged crowd. It serves Australian chow, including juicy pork sausages with mashed potatoes and onion gravy; beef stew; fish and chips; Australian sirloin steak; Irish stew; hamburgers; and cottage pie (baked bowl of minced beef, onions, vegetables, and mashed potatoes). Happy hour is from 11:30am to 9pm, with reduced prices. It's open daily from 11:30am to 2am. 11A Ashley Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2376 0562.** MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

CENTRAL DISTRICT

Al's Diner Rather innocent-looking during the day, this hamburger joint transforms into one of Lan Kwai Fong's most extroverted party scenes on weekend nights, no doubt fueled by the house specialty, jelly shots (jelly laced with vodka), and music supplied by a DJ. A few shots, and you may find yourself joining the others dancing on the tables. It's open Monday to Thursday from 11:30am

to 1am, Friday and Saturday from 11:30am to 4am, and Sunday from 11:30am to midnight. 39 D'Aguilar St., Central. ✆ **852/2869 1869.** MTR: Central.

Caledonia Taking Scotland's traditional name, this Scottish-owned and -managed bar is decorated with swords and coats of arms and is popular with Central's office workers, bankers, and lawyers, many of whom come for a meal of traditional Scottish fare: fish and chips, haggis (minced organ meat boiled with oats and spices in a sheep's stomach), neeps (turnips) and tatties (mashed potatoes), cottage pie, stovies (meat, onion, and potatoes simmered in a pot), or mince and tatties (minced steak served with mashed potatoes and buttered carrots). Of course, many also come for the more than 200 different labels of malt whiskey, the big screen for major sporting events, or the daily happy hour from 3 to 8pm. And if you want a Scottish ale with breakfast, this is certainly the place. It's open Monday to Friday from 8am to 2am and Saturday and Sunday from 11am to 2am. Hutchinson House, 10 Harcourt Rd., Central. ✆ **852/2524 1314.** MTR: Central.

California Located in Central's nightlife district, this chic bar was once the place to see and be seen — the haunt of young nouveaux riches in search of a definition. Newer establishments have since encroached upon California's exalted position, but it remains a respected and sophisticated restaurant/bar, with silent TV screens showing music videos or sporting events almost everywhere you look. You might consider starting your night on the town here with dinner and drinks — the innovative, young American chef has created a changing menu that ranges from sautéed prawn linguine Alfredo with roasted tomatoes, wild mushrooms, and extra-virgin olive oil, to grilled salmon with saffron potato risotto, sweet potato, and shellfish broth, though hamburgers (the house specialty) remain hugely popular. A plus to coming early is happy hour from 5 to 9pm, with two drinks for the price of one. On Friday and Saturday nights from 11pm to 4am, it becomes a happening disco, with hot DJs playing the latest hits. In any case, this place is usually packed, so be prepared for crowds. It's open Monday to Thursday from noon to midnight, Friday and Saturday from noon to 4am, and Sunday from 6pm to midnight. 24–26 Lan Kwai Fong St., Central. ✆ **852/2521 1345.** MTR: Central.

Captain's Bar That this refined bar is popular with Hong Kong's professional crowd, especially at the end of the working day, comes as no surprise considering the fact that it's in the Mandarin Hotel, a

longtime favorite with business travelers. Well known for its expertly made martinis, its pints of beer served in aluminum and silver tankards, and its weekday lunch buffets, it's a small, intimate place, with seating at the bar or on couches. Live music begins nightly at 9pm; there's even a small dance floor for those inclined to shuffle around. It's open daily from 11am to 2am. In the Mandarin Hotel, 5 Connaught Rd., Central. ✆ **852/2522 0111.** MTR: Central.

Club 97 Opened almost 20 years ago and still one of Lan Kwai Fong's most revered nightlife establishments, this club underwent a recent transformation that changed it from a disco to a sophisticated lounge, in recognition that it's customers had grown up and were more prone to predinner cocktails or late-night drinks rather than disco dancing. There's still a small dance floor, but gone is the foreboding entrance that once turned away any but the in crowd. Rather, an open-fronted facade invites a mixed clientele of gays and straights. Weekly events to watch out for are the Friday gay happy hour complete with drag shows, and Sunday reggae night, which draws a huge crowd wishing to chill out before the workweek begins. In any event, this place is a must for any decent pub crawl through Lan Kwai Fong. It's open Monday to Thursday from 6pm to 4am (happy hour 6–8:30pm), Friday 6pm to 4am (happy hour 6–10pm), Saturday 7pm to 4am (happy hour 7–8:30pm), and Sunday 8pm to 3am (happy hour 8–10pm). 9 Lan Kwai Fong, Central. ✆ **852/2810 9333.** MTR: Central.

MadDogs Catering to a mellow crowd of professional people during early-evening hours and a wilder bunch at night, this is one of Hong Kong's long-standing, popular English pubs, with a traditional decor reminiscent of Britain during its imperial heyday. (Some of the male staff wear kilts.) A wide variety of draft beers and Scotch malts is offered. It's often packed, especially during happy hour Monday to Saturday from noon to midnight and all day Sunday. There's a DJ every night; ladies get free drinks on Thursday nights from 9pm until "late." It's open Monday to Thursday from 10am to 2am, Friday and Saturday from 10am to 3am, and Sunday from 10am to 1am. 1 D'Aguilar St., Central. ✆ **852/2810 1000.** MTR: Central.

Oscar's This informal cafe/bar doesn't look like much inside, but then, hardly anyone goes inside. Rather, the youthful clientele fetches a beer, which begins at HK$44 (US$5.70) for a can, and then stands around outside, giving the scene the atmosphere of a street party. Part of the establishment's success is its daily happy hour, when beer costs only HK$30 (US$3.90) from 3 to 8pm. A

good place to meet people, it's open Monday to Thursday from 11am to 1am and Friday and Saturday from 11am to 3am. 2 Lan Kwai Fong, Central. ✆ **852/2804 6561.** MTR: Central.

Schnurrbart This is the place to come for German beer on tap, as well as a wide selection of bottled German beers. Popular with German expatriates, it serves sausages, sauerkraut, and other hearty German fare, with a menu that changes weekly. German beer begins at HK$38 (US$4.95), except during happy hour (3–8pm daily) when the price of drinks is reduced. It's open Monday to Thursday from noon to 1am, Friday and Saturday from noon to 3am, and Sunday from 6pm to midnight. 29 D'Aguilar St., Central. ✆ **852/2523 4700.** MTR: Central.

CAUSEWAY BAY & WAN CHAI

Wan Chai, once Hong Kong's most notorious nightlife scene for raunchy bars and prostitution, is back on the scene with a growing number of bars and erotic shows with female dancers, concentrated mostly on Lockhart and Luard roads.

Dusk til Dawn This is one of my top picks for an evening out in Wan Chai. Classier than most of its competitors, it attracts a mostly expat and Southeast Asian clientele, who come to take advantage of its 5-to-10pm daily happy hour, food and snack menu served until 5am, and nightly free live music starting at 10pm, provided by rotating bands that include Filipino musicians and an all-girl band. Open Monday through Saturday from noon to 6am and Sunday from 3pm to 6am. 76–84 Jaffe Rd., Wan Chai. ✆ **852/2528 4689.** MTR: Wan Chai.

Joe Bananas Under the same management as MadDogs, this has long been one of the most popular hangouts in Wan Chai, maybe because it's reportedly also one of Hong Kong's best pickup bars. Called "JB's" by the locals, it's a tribute to the rock, pop, and the movie greats of yesteryear. It's decorated like an American diner, complete with jukebox, posters, and music memorabilia. There is dancing every evening after 11:30pm, but a cover is charged only Friday and Saturday (though women get in free until 1am). Wednesday is Ladies' Night, with free drinks for women from 6pm to midnight. Happy hour is until 10pm daily. It's open Monday to Thursday from 11:30am to 5am, Friday from 11:30am to 6am, Saturday from 3pm to 6am, and Sunday from 3pm to 5am. 23 Luard Rd., Wan Chai. ✆ **852/2529 1811.** Cover HK$100 (US$13) Fri–Sat after 11:30pm, including 1 drink. MTR: Wan Chai.

TOTT's Asian Grill & Bar This flashy bar and grill, with a blood-red interior and zebra-striped chairs, offers fabulous views of Victoria Harbour and Kowloon from its 34th-floor perch. There's live music and dancing Monday through Saturday nights from 10pm, with a minimum drink/snack charge of HK$168 (US$22) on weekends only (there's no minimum charge for hotel guests or diners who eat here). Happy hour is from 5 to 8pm, with reduced prices for drinks. The bar is open Sunday to Thursday from 5pm to 1am and Friday and Saturday from 5pm to 2am. In the Excelsior Hotel, 281 Gloucester Rd., Causeway Bay. ✆ **852/2837 6786.** MTR: Causeway Bay.

TOPLESS BARS & HOSTESS CLUBS

Hong Kong's world of hostess clubs and topless bars has changed in the past 40 years. Back in the 1950s and 1960s, Wan Chai was where the action was, buzzing with sailors fresh off their ships and soldiers on leave from Vietnam. Then, it was a world of two-bit hotels, raunchy bars, narrow streets, and dark alleyways where men came to drink and brawl and spend money on women.

Today, most of Wan Chai has become respectable (and a bit boring) — an area full of new buildings, mushrooming high-rises, and Hong Kong's expansive convention center. There is a small pocket of depravity, however, concentrated mostly on Lockhart and Luard roads and consisting of bars catering to young revelers and shows of erotic dancers. To be on the safe side, stick to the two longtime recommendations described below. If you decide to explore on your own, be sure you know all the charges.

BBOSS This dazzling, 70,000-sq.-ft. hostess club can seat 3,000 people and claims to be the largest Japanese-style nightclub in the world. In fact, the place is so big that a full-size electric replica of an antique Rolls-Royce delivers customers along a "highway" to their seats. There are three nightly stage shows, at 9:20, 10:15, and 11:10pm, complete with a rotating stage so that everyone gets a chance to ogle the scantily clad performers. There's also a 20-member band, a smaller combo band, and a dance floor. Couples are welcome, though single women are not allowed, as they would compete with the scores of hostesses who flatter and chat with male customers. During the day, when entertainment consists of a pianist and singer, 2 hours spent with a hostess will set you back HK$450 (US$58); in the evening, a hostess sitting at your table for 2 hours will cost you HK$1,176 (US$153). Big spenders can even take hostesses away from the club for the evening (escort services are big business in Hong Kong, as a perusal of any local newspaper will

show). In any case, how much you end up spending will be determined by how many drinks you consume, how long you entertain a hostess at your table, and what time of the day or night you visit. If you're not careful, you could spend a fortune here. On the other hand, the place is so overdecorated in bows and the color pink, 1 hour may be all you can stand; in that case, come for one of the 30-minute shows, which costs HK$200 (US$26) per person, including one drink and a snack. It's open daily from 1pm to 4am. New Mandarin Plaza, 14 Science Museum Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui East. ✆ **852/2369 2883.** Minimum drink/snack charge HK$460 (US$60) until 9pm, HK$520 (US$68) after 9pm. Escort charge HK$450 (US$58) 1–4:30pm; HK$700 (US$91) 5–9pm; HK$1,176 (US$153) 9pm–1am; HK$1,000 (US$130) 1–4am, including 1 drink, snack, and service charge. MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui, then take a taxi.

Bottoms Up For years, this basement establishment had explicit pictures of its namesake at the entranceway. These are now gone in the club's bid for respectability, and it's probably the best place to go if you want a topless joint. Welcoming tourists, couples, and unaccompanied men (but not unaccompanied women), Bottoms Up was used as a location shot in the James Bond movie *Man with the Golden Gun.* It features soft red lighting and four round counters with a topless waitress in the middle of each. I suggest that you come during happy hour (5:30–8:30pm daily), when drinks are cheaper. It's open daily from 5:30pm to 3:30am. 14 Hankow Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui. ✆ **852/2367 5696.** MTR: Tsim Sha Tsui.

4 Only in Hong Kong

NIGHT TOURS

If you have only 1 or 2 nights in Hong Kong and you're uncomfortable roaming around on your own, I recommend an organized night tour. **Watertours** offers four evening tours that combine harbor cruises with various land activities. You can make reservations for these tours through your hotel. The Aberdeen & Harbour Night Cruise, for example, includes a sunset cruise on a traditional-style Chinese junk with unlimited drinks, dinner aboard a floating restaurant in Aberdeen, and a stop at a scenic overlook midway up Victoria Peak. This 4½-hour tour is offered nightly and costs HK$610 (US$79), including dinner. There are also shorter evening cruises (without dinner); Watertours offers nightly cocktail cruises at 6:15pm and night cruises at 9:30pm. Both tours last approximately 90 minutes and cost HK$290 (US$38), including unlimited free drinks. There is no contact number for Watertours; it can be

booked only through hotels. Almost all hotels in Hong Kong arrange tours. However, if yours doesn't, you can still arrange your tour through another hotel. Other tour companies offering night tours include **Gray Line** (✆ **852/2368 7111**) and **Splendid Tours & Travel** (✆ **852/2316 2151**).

NIGHT MARKETS

If you're looking for colorful atmosphere, head for the **Temple Street Night Market** (p. 155), near the Jordan MTR station in Kowloon. Extending for several blocks, it has stalls where clothing, accessories, toys, pens, watches, sunglasses, cassettes, household items, and much more are sold. Be sure to bargain fiercely if you decide to buy anything, and be sure to check the merchandise to make sure it isn't going to fall apart in 2 weeks. This is also a good place for an inexpensive meal at one of the *dai pai dong* (roadside food stalls), which specialize in seafood, including clams, shrimp, mussels, and crab.

Farther north, near the Mong Kok MTR station, is the **Ladies' Market,** which stretches along Tung Choi Street between Argyle and Dundas streets. Locals come here for inexpensive women's and children's fashions and accessories; some men's clothing is also sold. It's not nearly as touristy as the Temple Street Night Market, and the atmosphere is fun and festive. It's open daily from about noon to 10:30pm.

Index

See also Accommodations and Restaurant indexes below.

General Index

Aberdeen, 25, 118
  restaurants, 104
Above and Beyond Tours, 14
Accessible Journeys, 13
Accommodations, 39–73
  Causeway Bay, 49–50, 63–66
  Central District, 46–49, 56–58
  choosing, 40–41
  Hong Kong International Airport, 66–67
  Kowloon, 43–46, 50–56, 59, 67–71
  Mid-Levels, 62–63
  price categories, 41–43
  Wan Chai, 49–50, 63–66
Admiralty, 24
Airfares, 15–16
Airlines, 15
Airport, Hong Kong International, 16–18
  accommodations, 66–67
Airport Express Line, 17
Airport Shuttle, 17–18
Al's Diner, 165–166
American Express, 34
Amusement park, 124–125
Antiques and collectibles, 141–144
ATMs (automated teller machines), 5–6

Bahama Mama's, 164–165
Bars, 163–170
BBOSS, 169–170
Bird Garden, Yuen Po Street, 121
Boat tours, 126
Bookstores, 34
Bottoms Up, 170
Bowen Road, 129
Buddha's Birthday, 10
Buses, 28–29
Business hours, 34

Cabs, 31–32
Caledonia, 166
Calendar of events, 8–11
California, 166
Captain's Bar, 166–167
Car travel, 33
Cat Street, 140, 141
Cat Street Galleries, 142
Causeway Bay, 25
  accommodations, 49–50, 63–66
  nightlife, 163, 168–169
  restaurants, 98–102
  shopping in, 140
C Club, 163
Central District, 22–23
  accommodations, 46–49, 56–58
  nightlife, 163–165
  restaurants, 87–98
Charlotte Horstmann and Gerald Godfrey, 142
Chasers, 165
Cheung Chau Bun Festival, 10
China (porcelain), 144–145
China Art, 142
Chinese Arts and Crafts Ltd, 145, 151
Chinese craft emporiums, 145–146
Chinese New Year, 8–9
Chinese opera, 159–160
Ching Ming Festival, 9
Chung Ying Theatre Company, 161
Citybus, 29
CityFestival, 9
Cityflyer Airbuses, 18
Classical music, 160
Climate, 7
Club 97, 167
Club and music scene, 161–163
Cocktail lounges, 163–164
"Come Horse Racing" Tour, 128
Credit cards, 6
Currency and currency exchange, 4–5, 35
Customs regulations, 3–4
Cyrano, 164

Dance clubs, 162–163
Dance companies, 160–161
Delaney's, 165
Department stores, 146
Disabilities, travelers with, 13–14
Dragon Boat Races (Tuen Ng Festival), 10–11
Dragon Culture, 143
Drugstores, 35
Dusk til Dawn, 168

Electricity, 35–36
Electronics, shopping for, 147–148
Emergencies, 36
Entry requirements, 3

Fabrics, 148
Factory outlets, 150
Fashion, 149
Fa Yuen Street Market, 154–155
Ferries, 30–31
Lantau, 131–132
Festival Walk, 155
Film Festival, Hong Kong International, 10
Flagstaff House Museum of Tea Ware, 114
Flying Wheels Travel, 13
Fringe Club, 161–162

Gay and lesbian travelers, 14
Giant Tian Tan Buddha, 132–133
Gifts and souvenirs, 151
Granville Road, 150
Gray Line, 125–126, 171
Guesthouses, 71–72

Hang Seng Bank, 35
Happy Valley Racecourse, 130–131
Harbour City, 155–156
Harlech Road, 129
Health concerns, 11–12
Health insurance, 12–13
Heritage Tour, 127–128
Hiking, 129
History, Hong Kong Museum of, 111–112
Holidays, 8
Hollywood Road, 140, 141
Hong Kong Arts Festival, 9, 158–159
Hong Kong Ballet Company, 160–161
Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, 160
Hong Kong Dance Company, 160, 161
Hong Kong dollar (HK$), 4
Hong Kong Dolphinwatch, 126
Hong Kong Heritage Museum, 116–117
Hong Kong International Airport, 16–18
accommodations, 66–67
Hong Kong International Film Festival, 10
Hong Kong Island, 22
neighborhoods, 22–25
restaurants, 102–105
shopping, 152–154
sights and attractions, 114–117, 121–122
Hong Kong Museum of Art, 110
Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence, 114–116
Hong Kong Museum of History, 111–112
Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences, 116
Hong Kong Park, 121–122
Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, 160
Hong Kong Repertory Theatre, 161
Hong Kong Science Museum, 112–113
Hong Kong Sevens Rugby Tournament, 9
Hong Kong Space Museum, 113–114
Hong Kong Tourist Board (HKTB)
special-interest tours, 126–127
visitor information, 2–3, 16, 20
Horse racing, 130–131
Hospitals, 36
Hostels, 72–73
Hostess clubs, 169–170

Information sources, 2–3, 20–22
Insurance, 12–13
The International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA), 14
Internet access, 36
Itfans, 36

Jade Market, 154
Japanese department stores, 146–147
Jardine's Crescent, 153
The Jazz and Blues Club & Bar, 162
Jewelry, 151–152
JJ's, 162
Joe Bananas, 163, 168
Jogging, 129–130
Joyce Boutique, 149

Kaiser Estates, 151
Kowloon, 25–26
  accommodations, 43–46, 50–56, 59, 67–71
  nightlife, 164–165
  parks, 120–121
  restaurants, 75–87
  shopping, 154
  sights and attractions, 110–114
Kowloon Motor Bus (KMB), 29
Kowloon Park, 120, 130
Kowloon Peninsula, 22
  neighborhoods, 25–27
Kowloon Walled City Park, 120–121

Ladies' Market, 154, 171
"Land Between" Tour, 127
The Landmark, 149
Lane Crawford Ltd, 146
Languages, 36
Lan Kwai Fong, 23
Lantau island, 129, 131–134
Lantau Trail, 129
Layout of Hong Kong, 22
Li Yuen Street East & West, 153
Lobby Lounge, 164

MacLehose Trail, 129
Madame Tussaud's, 108
MadDogs, 167
Mail, 36–37
Malls and shopping centers, 155–156
Man Mo Temple, 117
Markets, 152–155
  night, 171
Marks & Spencer, 147
Mass Transit Railway (MTR), 28
Maxicabs, 32
Medical insurance, 12–13
Medical Sciences, Hong Kong Museum of, 116
"Meet the People" tours, 127
Mid-Autumn Festival, 11
Mid-Levels, 24
  accommodations, 62–63
Minibuses, 32–33
Mitsukoshi, 146–147
Money matters, 4–7
Mong Kok, 26–27
Museum of Art, Hong Kong, 110
Music, classical, 160

Ned Kelly's Last Stand, 165
Neighborhoods, 22–27
New Town Plaza, 155
New World First Bus, 29
Nightlife and entertainment, 158–171
  bars, 163–170
  club and music scene, 161–163
  current listings, 158
  performing arts, 158–161
Night markets, 171
Night tours, 170–171
Now, Voyager, 14

Ocean Park, 124–125
Octopus, 27–28
Organized tours, 125–128
Oscar's, 167
Out and About, 14
Outdoor activities, 128–130
Overjoy Porcelain Factory, 144

Pacific Place, 156
Parks and gardens, 120–124
Peak Explorer, 108–109
Peak Galleria, 109
Peak Tower, 108
Peak trams, 30, 107–108
Pedder Building, 150
The Peninsula hotel, 149
Performing arts, 158–161
Police, 37
Po Lin Monastery, 132–133
Porcelain (china), 144–145
Prince's Building, 149
Propaganda, 163

Restaurants, 74–105
Aberdeen, 104
Causeway Bay, 98–102
Central District, 87–98
Hong Kong Island, 102–105
Kowloon, 75–87
price categories, 74–75
Stanley, 103–104
Victoria Peak, 102–103
Wan Chai, 98–102
Restrooms, 38
Rickshaws, 33
Ripley's Believe It or Not! Odditorium, 108

Safety, 37
Schnurrbart, 168
Science Museum, Hong Kong, 112–113
Seasons, 7–8
Seibu, 147
Seniors, 14–15
Shadowman, 36
Shanghai Tang, 145–146
Shopping, 135–157
areas for, 138–141
best buys, 135–137
comparison shopping and bargaining, 138
guarantees and receipts, 137–138
store hours, 137
Shopping centers, 155–156
Sky Lounge, 164
Society for Accessible Travel and Hospitality (SATH), 13
Sogo, 147
SoHo, 24
Space Museum, Hong Kong, 113–114
Spectator sports, 130–131
Splendid Tours & Travel, 126, 171
Stanley, 25, 152–153
restaurants, 103–104
Stanley Market, 140, 152–153
Star Ferry Company, 30–31, 106–107
Subway, 28

Tai chi, 128–129
Taikoo Shing City Plaza, 155
Tailors, 156–157
Taxes, 37
Taxis, 31–32
Telephone, 37–38
Temples, 117–120
Temple Street Night Market, 155, 171
Theater, 161
Ticketek, 159
Times Square, 156
Time zone, 38
Tin Hau Festival, 10
Tipping, 38
Toilets, 38
Topless bars, 169–170
TOTT's Asian Grill & Bar, 169
Tourist information, 2–3, 20–22
Tours, 125–128
night, 170–171
Train travel, 19
Trams, 29–30, 109–110
Transportation, 27–34
Traveler's checks, 6–7
Travel insurance, 12
True Arts & Curios, 143–144
Tsim Sha Tsui, 26
shopping in, 138–140
Tsim Sha Tsui East, 26
Tuen Ng Festival (Dragon Boat Races), 10–11

Urban Council Ticketing Office (URBTIX), 159

Victoria Peak, 23
restaurants, 102–103
sightseeing, 107–109
Visitor information, 2–3, 20–22

Wah Tung China Company, 144–145
Walking, 33–34
Wan Chai, 24–25
accommodations, 49–50, 63–66
nightlife, 163, 168–169
restaurants, 98–102
Wanchai Market, 154
Water, drinking, 38
Watertours, 126, 170
Watson's, 35
Weather, 7–8

Welfare Handicrafts Shop, 151
Western District, 24
Western Market, 148
Wing On, 146
Wong Tai Sin, 118–120

Yau Ma Tei, 26
Youth hostels, 72–73
Yuen Po Street Bird Garden, 121

Zoological & Botanical Gardens, 122–124

Accommodations

Best Western Rosedale on the Park, 63–64
Bishop Lei International House, 62–63
Booth Lodge, 67–68
BP International House, 59
Caritas Bianchi Lodge, 68
Chungking Mansion, 71–72
Conrad International Hong Kong, 56–57
Eaton Hotel, 59–60
Empire Hotel, 64
Excelsior, 64–65
Grand Hyatt Hong Kong, 49–50
Grand Tower, 68–69
Great Eagle Hotel, 50–52
Harbour View International House, 65
Holiday Inn Golden Mile, 52
Hotel InterContinental Hong Kong (formerly The Regent Hong Kong), 43–44
Hyatt Regency Hong Kong, 52–53
Island Shangri-La Hong Kong, 57–58
Jockey Club Mt. Davis Youth Hostel (Mau Wui Hall), 72
JW Marriott Hotel, 57
Kowloon Hotel, 60–61
Kowloon Shangri-La, Hong Kong, 53–54
Luk Kwok Hotel, 65
Majestic Hotel, 69
Mandarin Oriental, 46–48
The Marco Polo Hongkong Hotel (formerly The Hongkong Hotel), 54
Park Hotel, 61
The Peninsula, 44, 46
Pruton Prudential Hotel, 61–62
Regal Airport Hotel, 66–67
Regal Kowloon Hotel, 62
The Ritz-Carlton, 48
Royal Garden, 55
The Salisbury YMCA, 69–70
S.G. Davis Hostel, 72–73
Sheraton Hong Kong Hotel & Towers, 55–56
Stanford Hillview Hotel, 70

Restaurants

Aqua, 92
Baci Pizza, 97–98
Banana Leaf Curry House, 85, 101
Cafe des Artistes, 92–93
Café Too, 93
Chili Club, 102
Chilli N Spice, 104
China Lan Kwai Fong, 90
The Chinese, 81
Dan Ryan's Chicago Grill, 81–82, 92
El Cid Spanish Restaurant, 82, 101, 103–104
Fat Angelo's, 85, 97, 101
Felix, 78–79
Fook Lam Moon, 79, 98
Gaddi's, 75–76
Gaylord, 82
Great Shanghai, 83
Grissini, 98
Happy Garden Noodles & Congee Kitchen, 86
Harbour Side, 83
Hunan Garden, 90–91
Indochine 1929, 93–94
Jimmy's Kitchen, 81, 94
Jumbo Floating Restaurant, 104–105
Luk Yu Tea House, 94–95
Main Street Deli, 86–87
Man Wah, 87–88
Marché Mövenpick, 103
M at the Fringe, 91
Po Lin Monastery, 134
Mui Wo Cooked Food Market, 133
One Harbour Road, 98–100
Open Kitchen, 102
The Peak Lookout, 102–103
Petrus, 88
The Pizzeria, 84
Red Pepper, 101

Sabatini, 79–80
Seibu department store, 97
Shang Palace, 80
Sichuan Garden, 95
Spring Deer Restaurant, 84–85
Thai Lemongrass, 95
Tokio Joe, 96
TOTT'S Asian Grill & Bar, 100
Va Bene, 91–92
The Viceroy, 101
Vong, 88–90
Yan Toh Heen (formerly Lai Ching Heen), 76, 78
Yung Kee, 96
Zen Chinese, 96–97